

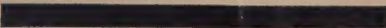
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SARTRE ON CUBA

A FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT OF
THE REVOLUTION IN CUBA
AND THE YOUNG MEN WHO
ARE LEADING IT—WHO
THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY
ARE GOING. 

BY THE FAMOUS EXISTENTIALIST PHILOSOPHER AND WRITER

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

BALLANTINE BOOKS

"IF THEY ASK YOU FOR THE MOON . . ."

I thought I recognized in Fidel an idea which was too important to me to speak about. Except with him. I said to him, "All those who ask, no matter what they ask, have the right to obtain?" Fidel didn't answer. I insisted: "That's your view?"

He puffed on his cigar and said loudly, "Yes. Because demands, in one manner or another, represent needs!"

He added without turning around, "Man's need is his fundamental right over all others."

"And if they ask you for the moon?" I said, sure of the answer.

He puffed on his cigar, verified that it was out, put it down, and turned around toward me. "If someone asked me for the moon, it would be because someone needed it," he answered me.

I have few friends. That is because I attach much importance to friendship. After this reply, I felt that he had become one of them, but I didn't want to waste his time in announcing it to him. I simply said, "You call the Cuban revolution humanist. Why not? For my part I know only one humanism, and it is founded neither on work nor on culture, but above all on need."

"There is no other," he said to me.

And, turning toward Simone de Beauvoir, he added, "From time to time, it is true, they intimidate me. Thanks to us they dare to discover their needs. They have the courage to understand their suffering and to demand that it be ended. In short, they are men."

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SARTRE ON CUBA

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

BALLANTINE BOOKS

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1 HAVANA—SKYSCRAPERS AND POVERTY

THIS city, so easy to understand in 1949, has confused me. This time I failed to understand a thing.

We are living in the fashionable district. The Hotel Nacional is a fortress of luxury, flanked by two square notched towers. Two qualities are required of its clients who come from the Continent: fortune and taste. As these are rarely reconcilable, if you have the first, they will grant you the second without looking too closely.

In the hall I often meet tall "Yankees" (they are still called that in Cuba, unless one terms them "Americans"), elegant and sporty. I look with surprise at their chilled faces. What's crushing them? Their millions or their feelings?

In any case, it's a problem which doesn't concern me.

My millionaire hotel room would hold my Paris apartment. What can one say about it? There are silks, folding-screens, flowers in embroidery or in vases, two double beds for me, all alone—all the conveniences.

I turn the air conditioning on all the way to enjoy the cold of the rich. While it's 86° in the shade, I approach the windows and, shivering sumptuously, I watch the passers-by perspire.

I didn't have to look long for the reasons which underlie the still uncontested supremacy of the Nacional. I needed only to raise the blinds. I saw long, slender ghosts stretching their limbs toward the sky.

The Nacional dominates the sea, in the manner of the colonial citadels which have been watching over the port for three centuries. Behind it, nothing: only Vedado.

Vedado was a guarded preserve—guarded against men, not against plants. This forbidden soil was con-

sumed by a jungle of grass. Then in 1952 it was divided into lots, and suddenly the grass disappeared. There remains a vague piece of ground, swelled by the eruption of these insane protuberances: the skyscrapers.

Personally, I like the skyscrapers; those of Vedado, taken one by one, are pretty. But they are all over the place. It's a disorder of form and color. When the eye tries to unite them, they escape—no unity, each one for itself. Many are hotels: the Habana Hilton (now the Habana Libre), the Capri, twenty others.

It's a race for floors. "One more, who will go one better?" At fifteen stories you have a pocket-size skyscraper. Each building strains to look at the sea over its neighbor's shoulder. Powerful, disdainful, the Nacional turns its back on this agitation. Six stories, not one more: therein lies its title of nobility.

There is also this: the revolution is inventing its architecture, which will be beautiful; it is raising its own cities out of the soil. Meanwhile, it fights Americanization by opposing to it the colonial heritage.

Against the voracious mother country that was Spain, Cuba formerly cited the independence and freedom of the United States; today, against the United States, she seeks national roots and recalls the image of her early colonists.

The skyscrapers of Vedado are the witnesses of her degradation; they were born under the dictatorship. The Nacional, certainly, is not very old, but it was built before the decadence, before the resignation. The revolutionaries are indulgent only toward the buildings constructed by their grandfathers during the first period of the democracy.

So they opposed one form of luxury to another; but, I told myself, the national aspiration of Cuba was not reduced to this. Of course, people spoke to me about the revolution every day. But it was necessary to see it at work, formulating a program.

Meanwhile, I looked for it in the streets of the capital. We walked for hours at a time, Simone de Beauvoir and myself; we went everywhere. I found that nothing had changed. Or rather, yes: in the working class sections, the condition of the poor seemed to me neither better

nor worse than formerly; in the other districts, the visible signs of wealth had multiplied.

The number of autos had doubled and tripled—Chevrolet, Chrysler, Buick, De Soto, all makes. One hailed a taxi; it stopped—it was a Cadillac. These voluminous and bedecked coaches went by at a man's walking pace, or lined up behind a handcart.

Each evening a torrent of electric light is let loose on the city. The sky is painted in rose, in mauve; neon bubbles everywhere and boasts of products made in the U.S.A.

Yet we knew that the government taxed luxury imports. We knew also, or thought we knew, that it controlled the currency, advised against pleasure trips abroad, took a series of measures to encourage domestic tourism. This didn't prevent an airline company from offering, in letters of fire along the edge of the Ocean, to transport Cubans to Miami.

De luxe restaurants are legion. One can dine comfortably, but the price is high: never under six dollars a head, often over ten. One of them was formerly the "folly" of an equivocating minister. His Excellency built a rock garden there, with pebbles, elaborate grotto-work. He had rocks sculpted in the image of nature; he staked out the cement of the paths with petrified flora and fauna, pushed perception to the point of reinventing the mineral world: stone was carved in the form of stone. To animate this little universe, he added real lions, caged. The cages now are empty.

In place of the lions and the minister, one sees summery dresses. Gentlemen, obviously foreign, contemplate with a bemused air these enchanted minerals. When I was there, English was spoken at every table. One dined with candles—that's the nth degree of luxury for a free citizen of the United States. The electricity will flow if one signals for it. No one gives the sign. Ostentation is scorned. By the tears of the wax candle one demonstrates to all a visible downgrading of the costly pomp of consumption.

The night clubs are more numerous than ever. Around Prado—the U.S. tourist street of old—there are swarms of them. Above their doors electricity reasserts its rights.

Alluring and blinking names pierce the eyes of the passer-by.

At the Tropicana, the largest dance hall in the world, there was a crowd around the green cloths. They gamble then, in Cuba? They still gamble? One of our companions replied briefly, "We gamble."

The slot machines were suppressed. But the national Lottery continues.* There are casinos and, in all the large hotels, gambling rooms.

As for prostitution, several houses were closed in the beginning, but afterward they were no longer bothered. Recalling this rather negative balance sheet I said to myself more than once during the first days, in their beginnings all, or nearly all, revolutions have one common characteristic: austerity. Where is the Cuban austerity?

Today, on a cloudless morning, I am seated at my table; I see from the windows the congealed tumult of the parallelepipeds and rectangles, and I feel myself cured of this malignant affliction which really had hidden the truth about Cuba: *retinosis pigmentaria*.

This isn't a word from my vocabulary. I was unaware until this morning of the evil that it designates. To tell the truth, I just found it while reading a speech of the Cuban minister, Oscar Pinos Santos, delivered July 1, 1959:

"After several days or several hours in Havana," he said, "I don't think a foreign tourist can understand that Cuba is one of those nations most affected by that international tragedy, underdevelopment. . . .

"He would have seen of this island only a city with magnificent boulevards, selling articles of the highest quality in the most modern stores. How could he believe in our misery if he counts the television antennas along the thoroughfare? Doesn't he think, after so many signs, that we are rich, with the modern tools that allow us to have a high productivity?"

There is, said Pinos Santos, a sort of disease of the eyes called *retinosis pigmentaria* which manifests itself

* Replaced now by bonds sold by INAV, the Ministry of Housing.

by the loss of lateral vision. All those who have carried away an optimistic view of Cuba are quite sick. They see directly in front, never from the corner of the eye.

Good. The ill-informed traveler doesn't lack excuses. I told myself, reassured, that I was blaming myself for nothing. One overcomes the disease suddenly. Only if he allows himself to be mystified and goes away contented, is the tourist culpable.

"Retinosis." The word escaped me. But for several days already I have understood my profound error. I felt my prejudices vacillating. To discover the truth of this capital, I would have to see things upside down.

It was nighttime. I was coming back by plane from a trip to the interior of the island. The pilot called me into the cockpit: we were landing. Already we were nosing down into a cluster of jewels—diamonds, rubies, turquoises. The memory of a recent conversation returned to me at that moment, preventing me from admiring that archipelago of fire against the black glass of the sea. These riches were not Cuban. A Yankee company produced and distributed electrical energy for the entire island. It had invested its "Yankee" funds in Cuba, but its headquarters remained in the United States and it repatriated its profits.

The fires grew larger, the precious stones swelled, became sparkling fruits; the cloth of night was torn away. Almost touching the ground, I saw the lights appear, but I said to myself, "It's foreign gold that's shining."

From then on, when I turned on the electric switch in the evening, I knew that my room was transformed out of the night by the grace of an electric company—the same one, so they told me, that controlled the monopoly of electricity in nearly all of Latin America. In the port of New York the lamp upheld by the immense and ineffectual Statue of Liberty took on its true sense: the North Americans were lighting up the New World by selling it, quite expensively, its own electricity.

The Cuban telephone likewise belonged to an American firm. This company had invested in this matter some excess capital. When Cubans called someone up, they

were communicating, in short, with the benevolent authorization of the United States.

I had misunderstood everything. What I took to be signs of wealth were, in fact, signs of dependence and poverty. At each ringing of the telephone, at each twinkling of neon, a small piece of a dollar left the island and formed, on the American continent, a whole dollar with the other pieces which were waiting for it.

What is there to say of a country whose public services are farmed out to foreigners? Interests conflict. What could the Cubans do against the immense trust that monopolizes electric current in all the Latin states? This company must have a foreign policy, and Cuba is only a pawn on the chessboard.

Now, a nation forges its unity in the same measure as its members communicate among themselves. If the foreigner is imposed on the citizens as a permanent intermediary, if it is necessary to go through him to light up work, study, or even private light, if the electrification of the countryside is decided or deferred in another capital, by the inhabitants of another country, the nation cracks up, its citizens profoundly divided. The U.S. monopolies introduced into Cuba a state within a state. They are reigning on an island rendered anemic by a financial hemorrhage.

Each time that the crane-lifts of the port place a new American car on the dock, blood runs stronger and faster. I was told, "The autos are costing us millions a year."

I took a closer look at the cars in Cuba and discovered the first imprint of the revolution. The Cubans shined them up, certainly—chrome and nickel were sparkling. But they were a bit out of date. The newest cars were at least 14 months old, 18 months perhaps. In Chicago or Milwaukee their twin sisters had been thrown on the junkheap. In short, Cuba was no longer in the running. The government knew what it was doing when it struck so heavily at these luxury imports. Car owners could no longer keep up the rhythm of the Continent.

Watching the incessant parade of cars, which had surprised me so much even the night before, I told myself

that I was looking at the dead. It was the revolution which had restored them, which had undertaken to keep them running. They had to last a long time.

Cuban by adoption, these American cars would serve Cuba for long years yet. After ten or twenty repair jobs, they will have saved the island ten times, twenty times more millions than they had cost. In this sector, at least, the hemorrhage was stopped.

By what followed, I understood still better the system that had clogged the streets of Havana with these heavy machines. I saw that six or seven people crowded into each car and that the owners were clothed without refinement, sometimes poorly. In Europe, autos go with the comfort of clothes, with affluence. It's the middle classes who buy them for the most part. But for a long time Cuba had submitted to the influence of the United States, where the lower middle class American and the better-paid workers have the means to acquire an automobile.

The Cubans imitated the Yankees without having their means. The most expensive makes were accessible, in short, to rather empty purses—on condition of dying of hunger. The Cubans accepted dying a little, behind their walls, in order to appear in public behind the wheel of a Chrysler.

I also learned to see Vedado and its skyscrapers in a different way. One evening I asked Carlos Franqui, the director of the newspaper *Revolucion*, about the fever which took hold of Vedado in 1952.

Who had built the skyscrapers? Cubans. With what capital? With Cuban capital.

"Are they so rich?"

"Not really," he told me. "There are some large investments, but mostly it's from small and medium size savings. Imagine some middle-aged shopkeepers who have put away five thousand, ten thousand dollars in their lives. Where would you want them to invest, since Cuban industry doesn't exist?"

"No one proposed that they create their own industries?"

"Several adventurers: some small retailers who wanted to develop their enterprise. It never came out well; the

large landowners didn't like it. They said so, and the rash manufacturer ended up by understanding. Besides, in any case, he wouldn't have sold a single share of stock. That's the custom among us—building construction takes everything. For our middle classes it is the safest investment."

Now I see that these modern palaces have grown out of the bad habits of an undeveloped country. Wealth, in Cuba, means the soil. It has given to several families millions of dollars and virtual nobility. The middle class, struck by the apparent stability of land ownership, imagined that it was a secure investment. Because of the scarcity of land, they acquired plots of ground; because they couldn't plant there, they covered them with buildings. To the industrial venture, they preferred the misleading stability of rent. Machines turn; they change; they are changed. Everything stirs—where is it all going? "Real estate" wealth, on the contrary, by its very name is reassuring. The constructed stone is inert, thus stable; and no one can go to another place with it since it doesn't move.

At the instigation of Batista and the speculators who surrounded him, these little rich men of a poor country were launched, without seeing the consequences, into the insane enterprises of competing with Miami. Today, these superb apartments remain to burden them. The skyscraper of Vedado is a copy which contradicts its model. In the United States, the machine came first; it determined the style of abode.

In Cuba, the craze for skyscrapers had only one meaning—it revealed among the hoarding bourgeoisie the stubborn refusal to industrialize the country.

2 THE GRANMA BRINGS REVOLUTION

REVOLUTION is strong medicine. A society breaks its bones with hammer blows, demolishes its structures,

overthrows its institutions, transforms the regime of property and redistributes its wealth, orients its production along other principles, attempts to increase its rate of growth as rapidly as possible, and, in the very moment of most radical destruction, seeks to reconstruct, to give itself by bone grafts a new skeleton. The remedy is extreme; it is often necessary to impose it by violence.

The extermination of the adversary and of several allies is not inevitable, but it is prudent to prepare for such an event. After that, nothing guarantees that the new order will not be wiped out in embryo by the enemy from within and from without, nor that the movement, if it is victorious, will not be deformed by its struggles and even by its victory.

One imagines that such a hazardous metamorphosis would be dreaded by the oppressed themselves so long as their condition remains nearly palatable. The masses can make up their minds to revolt only as a last resort and after they have tried everything else—adjustment of interests, mutual concessions, reforms. Can one even say that they make up their minds? Usually they are thrown into a revolution by some great cataclysm. Bankruptcy and famine, foreign war and defeat will decide for them, will sometimes force the revolutionary party itself to take power at an inopportune moment.

What surprises me here is that the troubles began so abruptly. Nothing announced them, not the slightest visible catastrophe. Four years earlier a *coup d'état* had brought Batista to power. Few people had protested—they were resigned to the dictatorship by disgust with their prattling and corrupt assemblies.

One day, all the same, July 26, 1953, a young lawyer, Fidel Castro, launched an attack on the Moncada barracks with a handful of comrades. But he was taken, imprisoned, condemned. Public opinion did not give him much support. "Who is this blusterer? There's an escapade for you! And which leads to nothing. If Batista were angry he would have taken it out on us!"

The opposition parties were quick to blame this rash man who had failed. The Cuban Communist Party spoke of adventurism. The Authentic Party threw up their

hands; the Orthodox Party* was more severe. Castro was a member of it when he attempted his coup.

"We need a left wing," said all these mature and reflective men. "It carries the hopes of the country. On his side, by demagoguery, in order to persuade America that there is freedom of opinion in Cuba, the President tolerates it on condition that it doesn't so much as raise a little finger. Very well! Let's do nothing except be here. Time is working for us! But we don't need an irresponsible kid to risk breaking this equilibrium by an escapade."

Silence fell again on the island.

Two years later a poor counselor suggested to the dictator that he would conciliate the people by some measures of clemency. Castro, pardoned but exiled, took off for Mexico. This blasé magnanimity fooled no one, and for the moment served only Castro.

After that, nothing. Some muffled outbursts arose in certain peasant regions, but the noise was lost in the fields and didn't reach the cities. Order reigned in Cuba. The dictator, at the pinnacle of his power, strengthened by fifty thousand soldiers and a willing police force, sold sugar and pleasure to the Americans, bought arms from the British.† No bankruptcy in sight. The island, certainly, didn't look too healthy, but that was chronic; as for Batista, his vaults were stuffed with dollars.

The chief of police adored the regime, was devoted to it unto the death. Each morning he received ten thousand dollars from Havana's gambling. The days followed one another and, at least in appearance, they resembled one another. Speculators speculated, shady dealers carried on their shady deals, the unemployed were unemployed, the tourists got drunk; the peasants, undernourished, wasted by fever and parasites, worked on someone else's land one day out of three.

Of every two Cubans only one knew how to read, but even he no longer read—the newspapers, firmly controlled, had become unreadable. Censorship was also

* Two Cuban opposition parties under Batista.

† In 1958 the U.S. put an embargo on arms shipments to Cuba—hence the British purchases.

exercised over books, devastating the book stores, the University.

The opposition parties continued to speak. They considered themselves the guardians of democratic liberties. All, even the Communist Party, called for elections. But their voices grew fainter every year, and the country no longer heard them. Batista was certainly detested, but no one knew what was needed to replace him. If you spoke to people of universal suffrage, they would laugh in your face. In brief, this was a country which seemed resigned to steady misery under a constant temperature.

And then came one day, which promised to be neither better nor worse than the others. In Havana that morning, as every morning, the police toured the gambling houses and collected the chief's commission; the morals squad fleeced the girls. The newspapers spoke of Wall Street and of the social set—who was at whose house last evening. They published the list of the most celebrated hosts in Cuba. The sky was cloudy, a strong breeze; maximum temperature 82 degrees in the west, in the east 86 degrees or a little more. It was December 2, 1956. On that day, without warning, the revolution began.

There were eighty of them who came from Mexico, piled in a little old boat, called the Granma. The sea was heavy; they had taken nearly a week to cross the Gulf. When they set foot on the coast December 2, not far from Santiago, they thought they were giving up the ghost. Many were barely able to walk, exhausted by vomiting.

Soldiers and police were waiting for them. Some young people were to have stirred up the city to support the landing. But the storm had delayed the boat, the riot had broken out on the agreed day and the young insurgents, alone and without help, had been massacred. Now the forces of order were on the alert. Conspicuous, surrounded, the little troop divided up into commando groups. A single objective: the mountains. They would regroup there. At the rendezvous many were missing.

Several had been surrounded, killed or taken prisoner; others were lost. One group went all the way back to the capital to install an underground network there.

Only twelve men reached the summit of the Sierra Maestra, highest mountain chain of the island. They hid there in the mantle of clouds which permanently surrounds the peaks.

On January 1, 1957, the situation appeared clear. The army and police held the cities and the plain. On a stony crest some thirty-odd "outlaws" were going to die of hunger. They would end by giving themselves up, unless some peasant, enticed by the promise of a reward, didn't trap them first in an ambush.

People in the cities shrugged their shoulders furiously. "It's Castro playing his pranks again. This time he's going to lose. He thought he was making a surprise attack, but the surprise was on him—it was an act of desperation."

The other day in Havana I met a friend of Castro, a companion of the first days. He said to me smiling, "In the beginning, you see, this took on the allure of a *putsch*."

But I wasn't at all in agreement with him. The *putsch* wins or loses in the cities. A little group of conspirators unexpectedly seizes the ministries, the central organs, the nerve ganglions of the capital. They owe their victory, if they attain it, to the element of surprise. The city goes to sleep under one regime, it wakes up under another.

But these men of December 2? They did quite the opposite of what an experienced *putschist* would have advised. They announced themselves, refusing to balance by surprise the inequality of the opposing forces. They made an appointment, so to speak, with Batista's soldiers. Better than that, they gave their address. They made known to the entire island that they were camping in the Sierra Maestra. From December 2 on, military planes patrolled over the clouds every day.

If they thus proclaimed their presence from the first day, it was surely not from lack of competence. When they judged it necessary we saw them march in secret on the enemy, strike quickly, and disappear. But in gaining the mountains, they achieved an immediate objective—publicity. The first thing was to make themselves known, to hide from the regiments of Batista, but not

from the country. So that the entire island should be thrown into an uproar, they counted on the regular troops to stun the country—orders, the noise of boots, gunfire.

They were not mistaken. The forces of order carried disorder everywhere, living off the peasants. They began to circulate around the mountains, and the people, resigned to oppression when it appeared as an officer established for a long time in the region, no longer found it supportable when it came to them under new masks. No, it wasn't bravado or a stupid gamble, this effort of a few young people to draw all the forces of reaction down upon them. They took the risk of death to inform their fellow citizens that the highest region of the island had escaped from Batista. Suddenly, the plain became aware of its servitude; ninety-nine hundredths of the island became "land to be liberated." But they hadn't reached that point yet, certainly not during the winter of '56-'57. First, they had to win confidence. And for that, to hold on, nothing else; to goad the military into rage, to show the peasants this spectacle—columns hung on the flanks of the Sierra, climbing painfully halfway to the summit and coming down empty handed, to go back up a little later and fall back again into the valleys with the stupid obstinacy of flies.

The rebels were not numerous enough to fight: that would come. The first task was to elude these heavy units by an extreme mobility, and then, on occasion, to attempt an ambush, to shoot, to throw panic into a company, to escape.

This difficult work, monotonous and dangerous, had to be begun anew each day as long as necessary, until the little troop, enlarged by numerous partisans, better armed, already formidable, had drained into itself all the hopes of a nation; until the people, witness to this unequal battle, broke the chains of skepticism and resignation, and transformed a "doubtful combat" into a revolution.

Quite the contrary of a *putsch*, as you can see. In a country atomized by oppression, by a half-century of anguish, young people risked their skins in isolated but public acts in order to restore the unity of the nation.

Everything was achieved, point by point, as they had foreseen. Thus, they were right. But why?

The dictatorship weighed on the Cubans, that is certain. But if, over the years, a country becomes disgusted with its democratic institutions, it can accommodate an authoritarian regime for a long time. Politics no longer follows a recipe. Nowhere. You need an intolerable evil before a people will launch an assault against barracks, before they will battle with bare hands against armed men. Furthermore, you need a continued reinforcement of this evil. When the peasants joined the side of the rebels, when they accepted the risk of killing or dying, the rebellion had certainly merited and finally obtained their confidence.

But confidence alone is not sufficient. Two conditions must be fulfilled: the imminence of a disaster and the announcement of a new hope, a new Ark. I'll speak later of the second condition; let's try to better understand the first.

I said that the sky was serene—from the east of the island to the west, nothing new, complete apathy. Since no visible peril menaced Cuba, it had to be that she was devastated by an underground cataclysm; it had to be that all, or nearly all, the social strata, under their apparent inertia, were swept along in an insane and mortal merry-go-round; that the speed of the secret cyclone accelerated from day to day, and that when the people grouped behind Castro, Cuban society was on the brink of collapse.

It was clearly a question of Batista! One would begin by throwing him out, certainly, but the real problem was more serious—this nation must remodel its structures from top to bottom or it would burst. This is what the rebel chiefs had understood. They were waiting for the people to feel the extreme urgency of the situation.

The island lived off sugar. One day people noticed that they could die of it. This discovery, which transformed resignation into fury and—as Castro hoped—inertia into revolution, I made in my turn as well the moment I left the cities for the countryside.

3 THE SUGAR QUOTA

A FIELD of sugar cane, in my opinion, is not exactly gay. In Haiti I saw some that were said to be haunted. I recall the red earth of a broken-up road, and the dusty rotting of the cane in the sun.

In Cuba, I recognize with the same respect the impenetrable multitude of these stalks. They press one against the other, they embrace one another, one would say that they entangle themselves around their neighbors, and then from time to time one discovers a fissure between them, a high tunnel, black and deep.

All the gradations of green—dark green, acid green, cabbage green, coarse green, blue green—assault the observer as far as the eye can reach. Each year, they cut the stalk; it does not have to be replanted for five years. This obstinate fecundity gives me here, as in Port-au-Prince, the feeling of being present at the ceremonies of a vegetable mystery.

The factory, called the *central*, was a stone's-throw away; I went there. The sugar *centrales*, scattered all over the island, are situated far from the cities, close to the plantations. There they manufacture this semi-finished product, raw sugar.

At the entrance, all is confusion: ox-drawn carts, trucks, pour out stalks onto a rolling belt. A jostling, disordered fall of greenish and dirty branches; whirlpools of flies plunge after them, into the ditch, and the belt lifts all the verdure toward the first metamorphosis, toward the set of iron teeth which will pulverize it.

Thick sap is gathered in vats, the wastes directed toward the boilers which are fed in this way. In principle, the cane furnishes both the material and the fuel—the factory is self-sufficient.

I crossed over to a furnace. Sweating, pestered by the flies, I stood by the portholes to watch the transforma-

tion of the sap. I saw the evaporation of the liquid, the pasty waves of the molasses. At the bottom of a vat, a spinning disc utilized centrifugal force for a last sorting. At the end, men were loading into bags humid, brown crystals which didn't shine.

They took the bags, I suppose, to the nearest port and piled them onto the boats. But that was enough for me. I took off.

Much more than the heat, it was the odor that overwhelmed me, an odor of beasts, as if the sugar was at one and the same time a sap and a wool grease. It didn't leave me for the whole day, stuck in my nostrils, at the base of my mouth, sweetening the meat, rice, cigarettes, even my pipe. It conserves the tastelessness of a natural distillation, but its slightly burned viscosity already evokes cooking and all the skills of work.

It is what is proper, in short, for a semifinished product, in full metamorphosis. The large refineries in the U.S.A.—those that receive this humid sand and make pieces of white sugar of it—I'm sure have no odor. In Cuba, sugar is scarcely refined. This powerful and overly organic smell is her own odor. This is what Cubans find at the base of their throats when they consume this pale, fresh by-product of their principal industry, *guarapo*, or in other words, cane pus.

An island of raw sugar! Who forces her to stop right in the middle of the operation? In the colonies, it is often said, the mother country buys the products of extraction, the alimentary products. It discourages, on the other hand, the industries of transformation. Cuba, dominated by one alimentary plant that it doesn't even process completely, offers the obvious profile of a colonized country. Soon it will be sixty years since she became independent and sovereign. I scented, behind this apparent contradiction, a farcical catch, one of those traps where history sometimes drops a whole nation, later forgetting it for years, or centuries.

There were cane plantations before 1900. Even in the time of the Spaniards there were Yankee investments. But the proud impotence of the landowners didn't encourage large concentrations.

Cuba was barely leaving the feudal era when, in 1895,

she took up arms against the mother country. The "great Spanish-Cuban war" was not simply an anticolonialist insurrection. The country wanted to revise its outmoded structures, to bring about, one hundred years late, its bourgeois revolution, and to found its civil liberties on economic liberalism—the rights of the citizen over those of the landowner, a modest but effectual industry: transformation, finishing; at the end of the operation, the light cavalry of products of consumption.

But the island at first would remain agricultural. They would diversify the crops to diversify the customers. They would offer harvests to everyone; they would sell to the highest bidder. José Martí, the leader—dead before the victory—of this first revolution, writes: "A country which trades with only one country dies."

Sixty years later, a speech by Castro answered him: "We Cubans never had any luck." The grandfathers of those who heard him had been naive: another trick played by the revolution.

They had taken up arms at the wrong time. They fought against the moth-eaten colonialism of Spain at a time when the real masters of the world were entering, one after the other, a severe crisis of imperialism.

Men in frock coats and the military in uniform met around maps and divided the world with strokes of the pencil. The U.S.A. couldn't escape it. The growth of production disturbed U.S. capitalists: they needed markets for their surplus products, safe investments for their surplus capital.

The Monroe Doctrine changed its meaning. Originally it was the definition of a policy. On December 2, 1823, the President of the United States published a message claiming "America for Americans." The United States, said he, would not interfere with the affairs of Europe, but Europe must no longer consider America as a land of defensive and peaceful colonization. America belongs to Americans, nothing more, nothing less. Toward 1900, a gang of businessmen and politicians translated this principle into a new language. It now read: "South America belongs to North America."

The second industrial revolution had begun, with its dangers, its disturbing mass production, the terrible

crises that it risks engendering. These facts, still dispersed and poorly understood, pointed the way to increased profits and revealed the system in all its fragility. Thus began a metamorphosis which took place gently and which no one mentioned: free enterprise and free competition disappeared; the trusts were born.

Such was the bad luck of the Cubans: for an entire century they had admired the U.S.A. without reserve. Their great outlaws had studied closely the free play of institutions, of competition, the link between civil rights and the regime of property. And when, strengthened by this example, they again began the war, their model no longer existed. A façade of liberalism hid the imperialism of the trusts, of which they were going to be the first victim.

Theodore Roosevelt was not yet President of the United States. Like our Jules Ferry,* he made himself the doctrinaire of colonization. His letters leave no doubt about his thought. The U.S.A., according to him, had only one means of reinvesting its surplus capital: pour it into the new countries of the other Americas and particularly Cuba, whose sugar beckoned.

The Cuban problem was studied while the Cubans fought. It appeared then to the enraptured Puritans that God had blessed their work; the affair promised to be better than they had thought. It needed only a little pluck and they would obtain unhoped-for results.

In the U.S.A. the beet growers of the South and the few cane planters produced little at a very high net cost. Incapable of satisfying the national demand, they needed fixed prices above the market to protect them.

Cuba was a gift of providence. It was just a matter of bringing the island into a closed system. Under the shelter of tariff protection, the American sugar producers would determine their price according to costs, without worrying about the world price. The domestic market would absorb their production and the complement would be furnished by the Cuban planters. But, to avoid

* Jules François Ferry (1832–1893), premier of France 1880–81 and 1883–85. His vigorous colonial policy extended French possessions in Africa and Asia.

the collapse of the market price, they would buy sugar from the island *at the same price* as that of the Yankee planters. This economic privilege would, as a first consequence, bind the island to the continent.

The Cubans fought; epidemics ravished the Spanish army. Suddenly the battleship *Maine* blew up, furnishing the United States with the pretext to intervene in Cuba, then a Spanish possession. (Today, professors of history, even in the U.S.A., cannot mention this American battleship without a discreet smile.)

There were some killed on the *Maine*, however. Public opinion was inflamed. Monroe, the man, and puritan generosity, launched the United States into a crusade against Spain. The old monarchy bled, pulled back its tentacles to Europe. Before the stupefied Cubans had time to thank their allies, the latter were changed into occupiers. A treaty signed in Paris gave them the provisional government of the island.

They stayed there four years—time to establish their terms. When they finally ceded Cuba to its inhabitants—that was in 1903—they had neglected nothing in order to make of the newborn nation a future monster, equal to the geese of Strasbourg, who die slowly in the pains of a too delicious liver.

They had even foreseen the jolts and convulsions. The Platt Amendment, added to the army appropriation bill of 1901, gave to the liberators the right to return in case of trouble—that is to say, whenever it pleased them—and to liberate their Cuban brothers as often as might be necessary.

The fertility of the island will be its chance for tomorrow. In 1902 it was the source of its misfortunes. Plant a stake there and it flowers. Nowhere in the world does sugar cane cost less. Thanks to the agreement concluded with the Yankees, Cuba sold her sugar at the highest price. Only yesterday, provoked by the visit of Mikoyan, the ambassador of the U.S.A. published this warning: the Cuban government is selling twenty per cent of its harvest to the Soviets at the world price. It has the right to do so. But if the North Americans decided to pay for their sugar at the same price, Cuba

would lose \$180,000,000 each year. To which the Cuban leaders replied simply, "Try."*

In effect, they have known for a long time that the interests of the American beet growers and of the island planters are inseparable. The same product will be expensive in New York and cheap in Moscow. That's the way Theodore Roosevelt wanted it and that's the way, after him, all the hosts of the White House have wanted it. All over the world, capital has the same dream: to finance undertakings which sell at the highest price what is produced at the lowest price. From 1902 on, in Pittsburgh, in Detroit, in Chicago, surplus dollars took flight and fell on the virgin land of the new Eden. Produced in America by steel, by machines, industrial money became sugar by touching the island. It bought fields, covered them with cane, raised the centrals which would grind the stalks and squeeze from them the thick sap.

Sold to Yankee consumers by Yankee landowners, the Yankee sugar of Cuba changed into dollars the moment it was unloaded in the U.S. Splendidly multiplied, these dollars came back to the same source whence they had left; they were distributed to the shareholders in the form of the most beautiful dividends in the world.

Theodore Roosevelt saw further. These pieces of gold and silver that were sent to a poor country for a tour of duty represent only one aspect of economic imperialism. The most immediate, perhaps the most brilliant—but not the most profound.

Produced in superabundance, sugar cane became the key factor of the Cuban economy. Other crops were overwhelmed, disappeared, or were never planted. Those which resisted were confined to the narrowest limits. The sugar industry developed to the detriment of the other industries.

Consider the luck of imperialism. By the very game of economic domination it creates among the oppressed

* In the late summer of 1960 President Eisenhower cut off the Cuban sugar quota. The U.S.S.R., Red China and East Germany promptly bought all the remaining Cuban sugar allocated for the U.S. In 1961 Commandante Ernesto "Che" Guevara negotiated the entire sugar crop with the Soviet Bloc.

needs which the oppressor alone is able to satisfy. The diabetic island, ravaged by the proliferation of a single vegetable, lost all hope for self-sufficiency.

The sugar agreements had their counterpart—puritan generosity promised to improve everything. Industrialists in the U.S.A. would sell manufactured articles at the current prices; the American farmers would make it a duty to sell foodstuffs to the Cuban peasants.

In the beginning, the Cubans were enchanted. It all began like a fairy tale—sugar was changed into gold. In 1901, the U.S.A. had consumed 2,963,000 tons of sugar, of which only 550 came from Cuba. In less than 10 years the proportion was reversed: 1911—1,674,000 tons from Cuba out of 3,800,000; 1924—3,923,000 out of 6,934,000.

This means that the island imported \$27 million in the first year of the century; 25 years later, cane brought it \$193 million. The news made its way to Europe. Some poor Spaniards went as emigrants to their former colony. The long sticky bamboos covered the island. Cane represented 25 per cent of production.

It took a quarter of a century and the first economic crisis to sober up the new nation. In 1901, in the drunkenness of victory, it had welcomed the equivocal proposition. This incredible offer to pay her more for her principal product than it was worth was made because they loved her.

Naturally, the offer hid a trap. Influential Cubans were thrown in, head first. At first, the entire island had followed, blinded by sudden crazy wealth, by the powdering of gold over her fields. Twenty-five years of ignorance and inertia—in other words, 25 years of complicity! Cuba was sold down the river; she saw it too late. Her keeper despised her a little. The better to hold on to her, he required her to live beyond her means.

From that period on, the most lucid Cubans understood that the balance of trade with the U.S.A. would always remain negative. The Americans shrugged their shoulders when one complained about it to them. "Cuba is a specialized island," they said. "Let her work for us; we will work for her."

They worked so well that the whole island was inun-

dated with their merchandise, from bulldozers and mechanical cranes to cigarettes and washing machines.

As for agriculture, things came to the point where the most fertile country of the Americas had to procure from the U.S.A. a third, and in some sections a half, of the foodstuffs necessary for its nourishment. She could have produced these without diminishing the cane harvest by a single stalk. It meant that she paid in dollars for the right to keep her brushwood.

The virgin land of the island, sacrificed not by the single crop, but by the social regime which was founded on it, found its counterpart somewhere in Ohio, in Utah, in California in millions of intensively cultivated acres. The grain that is not planted on the island, the plants that are not grown, are zealously cultivated on the continent. They cultivate vast expanses over there, each single-crop state a continental Cuba which nourishes the other, insular one.

The Frigidaires and vegetables leave the American ports; boats bring them to Cuba. But the Cubans don't see the color of the beautiful dollars which pay for the sugar. These bills are spent in advance. They stay in the banks in the U.S.A. to help pay for the island's purchases. Still, they are insufficient. Since no manufactured goods are produced, everything must be imported.

There was not too much trouble over the balance of trade. The Cubans received dollars for their sugar, but they had to give them back to the U.S. to pay for manufactured products and food. Accounts were settled in Washington. But in any case these clever balances no longer masked reality: a constant barter of merchandise. The Cubans never saw the money. The Americans were truly Indian givers. And in Washington the Cubans had a debt, continuously swelling. The dollars received for sugar sales to the U.S. were not enough to pay for all the things the Cubans needed and wanted from the U.S.

And it really swelled. There were lean years; Cuba fell in arrears and had to renounce payment on its deficit. The Americans showed themselves to be understanding. They continued to furnish autos and Frigidaires. They gave credit to everyone and the country crept along, weighed down with skyscrapers and machinery; and each

new government, on taking power, discovered a debt-ridden financial system, a deteriorating economy, and obligations which, though discreetly referred to, were unrelenting.

In certain, no doubt quite backward, countries an employer can re-establish a bondage contract by putting the debts of his employees to his own profit. Since all that is needed to liberate themselves is to buy back their credit rights, the debtors will work themselves to the bone. But, in order to work themselves to the bone they have to eat, and since they must get further into debt in order to eat, liberation never comes.

This was the case for Cuba up until January 1, 1959. She had a boss. Only one—a single employer, a single seller, a single buyer, or nearly so, a single creditor. She used up her strength and tired her lands producing sugar in the increasingly vain hope of reconquering her liberty. The statement of José Martí took on new meaning. People repeated it with mirthless smiles: "The nation that sells to only a single country dies."

Was it necessary to fight against Spain for so long only to find oneself again facing a single, all-powerful customer?

The government and Congress in Washington took unilateral decisions about sugar. Without recourse, they established the price of the short ton, the global quantity to be imported, the "quota" (percentage of Cuban sugar out of the total of U.S. imports).

Cuba had only to keep quiet. Against force she might have protested. But force was absent. Or invisible.

These authoritarian decrees were founded simply on the power of money, on the agreements that the Cuban leaders had freely signed. Washington held the island government by the throat for the simple reason that it was and would remain the only customer among all possible ones who would pay above the world market price for her sugar.

The society and economy of Cuba were developed on the basis of these high prices since 1900. If the U.S.A. did the impossible and became disinterested in its regular supplier; if Cuba, without industry, without reserves, found herself forced to sell cheaply while nevertheless

continuing to buy manufactured products abroad, it would mean ruin. The island, falling from its height onto the world market, would break its back.

Victim of a false abundance which concealed indebtedness, strangled by a privilege, the country saw a nightmare in the luxury of its wealth, a thinly veiled menace of famine.

The U.S.A. certainly had no interest in lowering the price. It would have had to abandon its policies at the same time. Besides, in the island, and particularly in sugar, it had investments which it had to protect.

There remained foreign competition. In Latin America, the Cubans had rivals who dreamed of replacing them. Washington could consider buying more from the rivals. In short, it could pare down the Cuban "quota" from one year to the next. The U.S. government was not unaware of this power. It didn't shun having it recognized.

"And if we lower the 'quota,' what then?"

In brief, it made this "sovereign" nation eat crow; and the nation ate because there was nothing else to do.

4 THE LATIFUNDISTAS

Is it better to build on sugar than to build on sand? Cuba made a bitter experiment on this shaky foundation. Because of sugar, she put herself into the Americans' hands, and it's because of sugar that she suffered from the repercussions of world action on America. Her master spurred on or braked her production according to the economic climate. First he stimulated her to the point of extracting five million tons in 1925. Five years later he threw her rudely into Malthusianism. Blocked by the Hawley-Smoot tariff, the island fell back to its earlier level: two million tons. It took 17 years to get back to the figure reached in 1925—five million in 1947; all records were beaten in 1952: seven million. As an

immediate consequence there was an overproduction crisis.

Batista came and thought that he had to treat sugar production like a fever to be brought down as rapidly as possible. In one year it fell from seven to four million. The cure was worse than the disease.

It is possible that the "optimum" figure lies somewhere between four and five million. For all of that, Cuban sugar is a slippery character. The constancy of an abstract "optimum" doesn't bring wealth; but these rapid and brutal shocks do cause ruin. What the Cubans didn't understand yet is that sugar's hypertrophy had destroyed or falsified all the structures of their society. Far from favoring an equitable distribution of the national revenue, this type of monoculture established the wealth of the few at the expense of the misery of others.

In 1900 Cuba had scarcely come out of feudalism. Its economy was in transition: few large estates, little industry, a scattered bourgeoisie, some artisans, but mainly peasants. This phase of national development is frequently called "precapitalist," particularly by the Cubans themselves. The sugar agreements hastened the transition while at the same time channeling it in the wrong direction. Industrialization and industrial concentration were, from the outset, held in check. On the other hand, the influx of American capital and, secondarily, the variations in the "quota"—which ruined the less wealthy—favored concentration in real estate. The big exploiters ate the little ones who could no longer resist; they increased their estates.

Certainly, in the course of this half century, Cuban landowners partially succeeded in recovering possession of Cuban soil. In 1939, American enterprises produced 55% of the crop, the Cubans 22%. By the 1950's the proportion was reversed—62% of the crop was produced by Cubans, 36% by the Americans. Nevertheless, the concentration accelerated: 161 enterprises possessed or controlled 184,000 *caballerias* (the *caballeria* is equal to about 33½ acres), that is, 27% of the national soil.

The owners are absent; they live in Havana, in New York; they travel in Europe. Their overseers distribute

work to day laborers—four months of wages, from December to March. After that, let them go hang themselves elsewhere. They have to live eight months without doing anything. They get into debt, sometimes to the village grocer, sometimes with their boss. Eight months later, when they go back to work, their future salary is consumed in advance by these mercenary loans.

To these lands without men, cultivated by men without land, the Cubans give the name that used to designate large ancient properties: "latifundia." As in the time of the Romans, they are characterized by absentee ownership, by extensive cultivation, and by immense fallow stretches.

Does sugar require all that? Yes and no. No matter what the regime, the cultivation of cane presupposes the concentration of land. But only the sugar agreements require the latifundia. It is in the interests of the U.S.A. that American farmers, as we have seen, should take on the burden of feeding these specialists—the peasants of Cuba. The single crop brings a double yield: first by what it produces, and secondly by what it prevents from being planted. If the Cubans sowed rice, cultivated tomatoes, what would the rural population of the continent do? Certainly, the Americans didn't hope that cane would overrun the island all the way to the sea coast. They were afraid of overproduction, of glutting the market, of depressions. But, they said, why deflower your lands? Virgin soil is so pretty. Take our orders for sugar and those of the rare customers that we let you have, and plant and harvest the cane to meet your obligations. For the rest, let the island remain natural. Leave it to the sun and to the sea.

The large landowners found this advice judicious. The less trouble one took with cane, the better.

I said that they burn the plants at the end of seven years to replenish the soil. But for six years in a row the same stalk is cut, and the stump grows up again and each year, starting in December, it insolently awaits the black sickle, the machete. Why work oneself to death on a morsel of ground? Why work by the centimeter, covering the island with miniatures, when a gesture is sufficient to impregnate thousands of acres and to give

seven years of happiness to the master of the estate? Seven years of traveling, too. Decapitated, the cane revives and offers itself up to the same guillotine blade. Who needs the owner? Nothing changes. An overseer will do.

All the capitals of the world have known these pale, fat men, always overcome, even in Paris, by the memory of the subtropical temperature they were fleeing. Their semifinished products, like sugar, came to be refined in Europe. One of them knew all the bells of Germany, another the history of our Gobelins. But down there they remained barbarians—even in their absence—because they devastated the most fertile lands with a rude voracity by routine means, and because they abandoned the rest of the soil to brushwood.

Out of a hundred and eighty thousand *caballerias* that they possessed or controlled, hardly a hundred and twenty thousand were cultivated. They wanted a flexible and prudent production that would follow exactly the capricious outline of the quota. The specialization of the island pleased its foreign protectors. The Cuban landowner found that it paid. What did the extensive cultivation require? Teams of agricultural laborers, who worked a third of the year, and who were then turned away until the following year. A multicrop system, if it should unfortunately develop, would require—as it had in other regions of the island—an “intensive” technique, the diligent presence of the cultivator. It would be necessary to develop a whole network of farms, of dairies. One would no longer be master in his own home.

The *latifundistas*—that’s the name that they are given here—feared that the peasants might become more difficult, more conscious of their rights. The cane cutters got angry sometimes, but they were nice guys who didn’t know how to read, and besides, they would work for a mouthful of bread.

The regime of the latifundia and the voluntary sterilization of Cuba go together. The infernal cycle of sugar requires it. It’s at this point that it exercises its influence from a distance on the oldest enterprises of the island, on the *ganaderias* (cattle ranches). Introduced by Spain before the war, husbandry was the principal resource

of the island up until the end of the eighteenth century. Beaten by the cane plantations, fallen into second rank, it lined up behind the victor, finding in this very victory an encouragement to revive or to develop its old colonial tendencies. In 1958, animal husbandry reported an income of a hundred million dollars and gave work to a hundred thousand men. In consideration for their good services the breeders found it legitimate to occupy 68% of Cuban land. Out of three million acres that they were awarded, there were naturally all varieties: fertile soil and some which was less so. But a handful of big landowners condemned pell-mell all that they controlled to infertility. Cattle wandered in these large spaces, and on the continent the producers of rice, of tomatoes, and of red beans were making their fortune. Without a gesture, without a word, American imperialism, with the aid of its Cuban allies, reinforced the feudalism that its military forces had pretended to destroy.

The cattlemen and planters both served the interest of the Yankees, and vice versa. They discouraged this country from industrializing. The U.S.A. feared competition; the big landowners dreaded the rupture of the internal equilibrium. If they permitted the industrial bourgeoisie to grow, if the farm laborers left the fields to become engaged in the factories, what would happen?

These little kings blackmailed the island for America without the latter having to get involved. They repeated in their newspapers and in their committees, "Watch out for reprisals!" If anyone wanted to start up a factory, he would hear them cry, "You are crazy; they are going to lower the quota."

All the Cuban governments were agreed on misusing the powers of their office. Under the attractive name of free exchange, customs protected the invasion of the market by U.S. articles. The National Bank, the private banks, the credit offices, by favoring building construction, reversed the normal flow of capital, discouraged Cubans from investing in industry, and transformed the petty bourgeoisie—against their will at first, later with their agreement—into owners of buildings or apartments, into property holders.

Ideas stem from practice. When these men had been

persuaded that their misfortunes would remain immutable, that an iron law, promulgated for the Caribbean, islands prohibited the Cubans from planting tomatoes, from manufacturing pens, they drew the sole conclusion: let's not wake up the sleeping land; let's allow the island to perish, and its denuded soil to crack in the sun. Down with diversification of crops and industrialization! Let's put our money into building construction and renounce our freedom.

By 1949 the propaganda had already been so effective that a salesclerk pulled out of my hands a comb that I wanted to buy. "Not this one, sir; it's made here!"

The whole system rests, of course, on the incredibly low wages. Even at high prices you can't earn enough from agricultural products to buy machinery, unless unskilled farm labor is really paid nothing. Unemployment and overpopulation are indispensable auxiliaries. If the demand for jobs grows while the supply remains constant, each worker will be less demanding than his neighbor, and the average wage will tend toward zero.

In this combination, illiteracy has its role to play. So that the people would grow poorer while allowing the rich to grow richer, it is preferable to keep them in ignorance. Learning to read is learning to judge. So you don't teach them anything. In the first place you don't give them any schools.

When Castro took power, half the teachers, because of lack of places, were on unlimited leave, without pay. They went back into service, but it was necessary to triple their number and even that was insufficient. In brief, before 1959, 45% of Cubans were illiterate, and 45% were peasants, and I think that the two percentages, on the whole, represented the same men. Ignorance wasn't the result of poverty; poverty and ignorance were imposed at the same time by the masters of the island.

Cuba, it is said in Europe, is an underdeveloped country. I admire the modesty of this neologism—underdeveloped. It's no one's fault. Perhaps it's the climate, or perhaps the resources of the soil. Who knows? Or the indolence of the inhabitants. In any case, the responsibility is Mother Nature's. She turned out to be a step-

mother, stingy or maybe too wasteful with her gifts. Above all, don't blame people.

Since I've been here, quite to the contrary, I see the crime of man everywhere. It's right before your very eyes. Blackmail and violence have reduced the Cubans to the practice of intensive farming methods which have been disastrous for the soil and stultifying for the workers. Violence and blackmail have condemned them to a shortage of jobs through the refusal to vary the crops, and to unemployment by the refusal to give them factories. Men seeking their own self-interest, arrested the history of Cuba in 1902, and by an injection of dollars, manufactured out of whole cloth a retrogressive economy. Cuba is an underdeveloped country, I'll grant you that, but that's because other countries, with Cuban complicity, have prevented its development. This complicity is indispensable; it saved face; puritanism kept a pure conscience. I said that certain planters, at the beginning of the twentieth century, urged the Americans to seize the island and to annex it. The government of the U.S.A. recognized the temptation but never gave in to it. A great nation doesn't deny its principles. And when, around 1900, it found some ingrates taunting the liberating army to linger in Cuba, Washington was shocked: a country of liberty spills its blood to bring freedom to others and not to take it away from them.

In fact, the American army ended up by withdrawing—when its colonial terms were settled. America gave to the young nation its sovereignty, but at the same time the sugar agreements stole away its economic independence. Washington openly recognized the inalienable rights of Cuba and took away the means for asserting them. Later, the U.S.A. established its authority by the sugar blackmail. This menace terrified the landowners—it is not certain that it intimidated the peasants. They suffered too much from their real hardships to add any imaginary worries to them. If these realists ever became stirred up, it would be useless to shake the quota under their eyes. They would need an effective and tangible call to order. Force. But whose? Even in the days of the Platt Amendment, an armed intervention by the U.S.A. would have appeared awkward (although they sent ma-

rines three times before 1920). What good would it do to dot the *i*'s and cross the *t*'s? Luckily, the continentals had allies on the island. Here, in all its importance we see this agreement, concluded so quickly and never denounced, between the democratic, capitalist puritans and the very Catholic country squires of this agricultural land. Stripping the earth and the men, not only for the Yankee producers but also on their own account, these *latifundistas* quite naturally procured the organs of coercion and repression. The army was Cuban. Sprung from the landed aristocracy, its leaders shared the aristocracy's prejudices. The soldiers were mercenaries, peasants tired of misery, or the unemployed who were sold to the highest bidder—fifty thousand men, barracks at every crossroads in the cities and in the villages. This army didn't really obey the Cuban Chief of State, no matter who he was—it was on loan to him. In truth, it was the naked power of the large landowners. It supported a regime only as long as the real bosses found it in their interest to do so. And then when the moment came, it struck down this house of cards, or, announcing its neutrality, it permitted a government to be overthrown. Another replaced it. The new leaders too would be allowed to prattle at will, but their days were numbered.

Thus, political institutions served as a cover to Cuban reality. It masked the military dictatorship that the large landowners, even in democracy, exercised over the destitute land.

As for the professional army, under its fancy dress and its nationalism, it played its permanent double role. Some of its officers, I am sure, pulled a curtain over their own eyes so as not to see that they were protecting their caste and foreign imperialism from the people. The more cynical had to smile—these Yankees had had the malice to oblige the Cuban people to provide for the needs of an expensive national army, which was charged with keeping Cubans in line. In any case, the military leaders didn't question themselves often. They were the army of sugar, that's all.

The army didn't have to get involved in the connivance between the feudal lords and the foreigner. By its pres-

ence it guaranteed that cane was and would remain the destiny of the island.

By consent or by force, India belonged to the English as long as the troops of Her Majesty remained there. Cuba never "belonged" to the U.S.A. The proof was that this national army, provided for by the fundamental laws of the Cuban democracy, guaranteed order and the independence of the country. National sovereignty found its most striking expression and its support in the military institution, and the army that it had forged, by its very existence, by its origins and its loyalties, was transformed without anyone noticing it, into the steam hammer that pulverized it. The puritans of Washington reigned. But one never saw their hand. Without too much effort they could even forget these troops, which they didn't command, which they had never seen, perhaps, and consider their providential profits as a mark of divine favor. An ingenious hocus-pocus.

5 THE DIABETIC MONSTER— AN ISLAND OF SUGAR

HERE then, is the misfortune of Cuba, a colony which wanted to liberate itself, and which, after years of war, again found itself semicolonized. That began around 1900; 59 years later everything exploded. It was revolution. Why?

Because this broken, atomized society couldn't accommodate itself to its atrophy, it produced in its womb an underground cataclysm which from year to year began to churn more rapidly, ravaging everything, rendering the situation less supportable each day. Since the beginning of the last century the birth rate had continued to grow. The fallacious prosperity of the early days threw off-course a movement that misery resumed on its own account. In 1899 the island had 1,500,000 inhabitants. In 1960 there were 6,600,000.

The meteoric rise of births is a trait common to "underdeveloped" nations. Before life, before death, the peasant maintains his traditional attitude. He makes children without counting. Nature gives them; if there are too many she will take them back.

And then, one can well imagine, the cane cutter didn't even have an idea of what, in certain countries, is called "planned parenthood." To plan births, you have to have faith in the future. The Cubans, up until 1959, had no future. They lived for the moment, especially the most miserable who, each year, after four months of work, awaited the return of eight months of unemployment, the "dead period." Nothing is as prolific as resignation. Families of eleven children are not rare in Cuba, even in the cities, where the petty bourgeoisie has kept the patriarchal structure of the family and the peasant rhythm of natality. During the twenties, a precarious equilibrium was established in Cuba between the increase in children and the increase in tons of sugar. Unfortunately, production reached a ceiling in 1925, fell, and finally, despite the seismic sharpness of its variations, ended up contained between constant, less fluctuating limits. The tide of births covered everything. Everywhere new mouths opened. New mouths to feed.

But food wasn't increasing. The sons were poorer than the fathers. The children were born out of poverty, and poverty was born out of the system. Since industry was allowed to stagnate, the sons of the unemployed were unemployed from birth. The cane slave, with his four months of wages, had to feed a family which was growing every year. The standard of living kept dropping. In the countryside, three million men, without quite knowing real famine, were born to undernourished parents and would grow up underfed. Because they couldn't find work, the young people left the cities; a few emigrated to Europe.

I asked myself a while ago from what invisible disaster the Cubans had drawn these forces of revolt masked by resignation, this violence which had thrown them on the path to revolution. I knew. At bottom it was always the sugar cycle. But at first I had understood only in general terms. Now I see that this established system was

developing, producing lasting effects, consolidating them and augmenting them. In brief, I see that it was in a state of perpetual becoming, that each instant was accentuating its hold on the island at the expense of the inhabitants.

From year to year the population pressure increased the mutual antagonism of the wage earners, making each worker the other's competitor, who wanted to steal his job. From year to year wages tended by themselves toward zero; there was a rush to get hired, and people worked for almost nothing. From year to year the relative number of schools diminished while the need for them increased.

The system is maintained by its consequences. By brutal injections, it created this diabetic monster—an island of sugar. And the island, in turn, produced its monster—the man of sugar begins to multiply.

Everything was going according to the wishes of the big landowners and their continental friends. No, not quite. Let's recall the overproduction of 1952. Was it a coincidence that brought Batista to power?

The army chiefs, men of quality, despised this sergeant who, they whispered, had Negro blood. The *latifundistas* reproached him with being a man of the "people," which, in Cuba, means practically illiterate.

As for the Americans, they didn't say a word about him. The American press never made any allusion to his conduct of government (like a fan, blowing from corruption to torture to murder), to show their disapproval of him. The American public was unaware and even today is unaware for the most part, at least, that Batista was a hangman. In brief, this man didn't even acquire the sympathy of those who used him. If, however, one had recourse to his services in 1952, if the army had imposed its ranks on the people, if the *latifundistas* tolerated his violence, if several of them even became compromised with the regime, it was because all these profiteers considered the remedy to be indispensable. When the house is burning, you put out the fire any way you can, with whatever happens to be at hand.

This imbecilic brute had both guile and temerity. They

let him alone. Better than that, Batista withdrew to the U.S.A. Who, after his defeat in 1944, advised him to be a candidate in the 1952 presidential elections? Who financed his electoral campaign? Who advised him to forestall a probable defeat by an act of force? In any event it was the goddess Cane. He came, charged with a precise mission: to strangle the overproduction, then to throw the peasant families into misery by the thousand, and to muzzle the island.

But if the interests of sugar found such a cruel and grotesque defender in 1952, it was certainly not by chance. Machado himself (called "the Butcher"), who tyrannized Cuba up to 1933, remained at the level of a man. A wicked, avaricious man, certainly; but the island was not yet very sick. It didn't yet need the government of a monkey. When a chimpanzee took power in 1952, the die was cast, and the masters of the island—there or abroad—understood obscurely that there was henceforth but one choice: the Cubans would be monkeys or revolutionaries.

The system had pronounced sentence on itself. The population of the poverty-stricken had *quadrupled* in 50 years. Overpopulation? No. The island, properly exploited, could easily feed 10 million men.

But it was the sugar regime, with its latifundias, that itself defined the newborn as excess lives. In explaining to the poor from time immemorial that man is put in the world to press the earth with his bare hands to make it sweat cane juice (no sugar, no island), they also explained that this iron law condemned them to live poorly, and that they had to accept their lot.

As much as they could, they accepted. But the fecundity of poverty lowered the standard of living without respite. Resigned one day, they opened their eyes the next to find the situation still worse. Resignation had to be maintained at the price of a new effort.

They had been shown the impossibility of living well, but their bodies suddenly experienced another impossibility: that of dying like beasts, crushed. Castro, the son of a country squire of Oriente province, heard—alone, or almost alone—the first murmurings, the first voices that said, "This can't go on."

He was the first to understand that the peasant condition was not defined by chronic hardship, but by the continued *growth* of hardship.

I saw the traces of this hardship. Everywhere the revolution is working. But it is only 14 months old. One can easily imagine that much remains to be done. I saw what the head of the rebels saw from boyhood: the *bohios*.

The Indians, before taking permanent leave 300 years ago, willed to the unfortunates who took their miserable places, their dwelling places and the method of constructing them. The *bohios* are huts.

They consist of several disjointed laths planted around a stake which supports a pointed roof made of dried palms; the ground is of beaten earth. Everything is missing: electricity, of course, but also latrines. On the black, cold ground are a swarm of undernourished, sick children. The men have left for the fields. Sometimes, on the threshold, a woman watches us pass. Sometimes she's white, sometimes she's Negro. But black or white they have the same fixed, hollow eyes.

In Europe, we're not acquainted with this poverty amidst abundance. Vegetal exuberance covers everything with its silks, its wools. The rug had to be torn, clipped with a shears in a circle, in order to find for man a floor: the naked soil.

The earth throws against the sky these solitary sovereigns, the royal palms. Among these long, sweet white bodies swollen with sap, the *bohio* testifies that destitution comes to men through men. By the massive injection of dollars, the rich implanted poverty, scarcity of subsistence, and ignorance in the midst of an incredible fertility. Castro saw this increasingly evident contradiction. He foresaw that it would be at the root of the peasant revolt. These men would not much longer accept the tormenting of the earth to support foreigners and absentee owners. They would soon refuse to work with an empty stomach; they would refuse to violate nature, by forcing it to undernourish them. This wealth at their fingertips denounced poverty as a crime.

For having guessed this profound scandal when the

poor themselves felt it without knowing it, Castro, from 1952 on, acquired the right to lead them to victory.

This optimistic naturalism which has so often struck me among the Cuban revolutionaries, stems, I imagine, from this: Nature is good; it's man who causes evil. I'll have to come back to that. For the moment, we are only at the diagnosis: reduced to the elementary structures of a feudal regime, pulverized by economic terms which transformed her into a semicolony, a society, prolific through poverty, suffocates on its island in the midst of fallow lands and unexploited resources. A handful of men led the people to asphyxia. It would suffice for another handful of men to call, for the people to rise up, break the infernal machine, and throw it to the bottom of the sea. Anger could foment an outbreak. But it wouldn't be enough to totter a regime. In order for a whole people to throw themselves against the fortress of their masters, they must be given a hope.

The Cubans had understood, in the course of their inflexible degradation, that History makes the men. It remained to show them that men make History.

It was necessary to seize Destiny, that scarecrow planted by the rich in the cane fields. The Cuban nation had had its fill of programs. During the time of the "democracy" the gentlemen of the city had gotten the peasants drunk with words. Only a simple and clear action could give them courage—on condition that it had the irreversible density of an event, and that it was, by its provisional incompleteness, the beginning, without promises and without words, of an enterprise that would require the participation of all to be accomplished; on condition that it changed life and that it gave them the desire to unite in order to carry change to its most extreme limits.

It came. One day, from the highest summit of the island, lightning struck the fields. Chased by the army, by the police, the "outlaws" of Castro decided to undertake an immediate redistribution of land, and made it known to the country.

6 "I CAN'T STAND INJUSTICE"

CASTRO told me the other day that he was a professional revolutionary, and when I asked him what he meant by that he said, "It means I can't stand injustice."

He gave me some examples that he drew from his childhood and his adolescence. I understood that he was speaking only of himself and of the ill-treatment that they had attempted to inflict on him. What pleased me in this answer was that this man—who fought, who is still fighting, for a whole people and who has no other interest than theirs—first recalled for me his personal passions, his private life.

He never let things be, he told me, returning blow for blow, to the point of being expelled from college. I imagined him at fifteen, a young trouble maker, a tough kid, indomitable, but lost.

The son of a country squire, a resident of Santiago, he spent his vacations on his father's property in Oriente province. His older brother, with some anticipation, was already preparing to continue the life his father had led. But neither Fidel nor Raúl, his younger brother, knew what they were going to do in this world.

Fidel at that time hoped to pull out of his difficulty through knowledge. Science would light his way; he would understand; he would be able to wipe out this nest of vipers in him, this confused violence which was stifling him.

He left for Havana, studied, was disappointed. He learned the inanity of words. The professors spoke to these disturbed adolescents in order to say nothing. As for the essential questions—those which torment a young man starting out in life—the teachers were careful not to answer them. What shows Castro's vigorous mind is that he felt that the inadequacy of the programs and the courses were deliberate injustices to which he was

obliged to submit. They wanted to plunge him into a vainglorious and servile ignorance. It's the first time, I think, that he expressed this profound thought, the undeniable source of all his future activity. No matter how important natural factors are, the evil that afflicts mankind comes from other men.

The Cuban masters of the island, lazy and morose tyrants, were suspicious of knowledge because it led to subversion. The shabby state of higher education was premeditated. To protect the underdevelopment of the Cuban economy, they tried to produce in Cuba only underdeveloped men. Castro's violence is not madness. This is shown by his resolute decisions in moments of calm. He wouldn't let things be. He had to overthrow the caste that would have emasculated him.

This decision, in another man, would have remained only words. What could a young man do alone against society? But what rendered his decision practical, and later, effective, was that, despite his professors, his family and his class, he discovered that the same regime that exercised control over the students, in refusing them knowledge, was the regime, using the same reasons, that deprived the country children of schools, that rationed the workers' bread.

This unitary vision of Cuban problems would later become the Truth of the Revolution. In 1952, it was only a presentiment. Its premature advent caused Fidel to go astray.

In effect, the young man didn't doubt for an instant that all his comrades, in fact, all the inhabitants of the island shared his anger. Since it was gnawing away inside of him, it must be gnawing away everywhere. Because of his own optimism, he underestimated the skepticism of his compatriots. Resignation, that by-product of oppression, masked their profound revolt. Before taking up arms, everyone waited for his neighbor to begin. Castro thought, "I'll begin." He would attack the Moncada barracks (an army fort in Santiago); that would be the spark. Immediately afterward, general insurrection would break out.

It didn't break out. Castro was jailed. In prison and later in exile, he reflected.

The experts of the period willingly attributed the island's misfortunes to Stepmother Nature, or to the stratifications of History. The sure revolutionary judgment of Castro caused him to seek the responsibility among men.

A dreadful mechanism devastates society. It's necessary to change it. It's not changed. What's stopping us? The interests of the large Cuban landowners, of the foreign capitalists? That's self-evident. But how many are they? What force is crushing the Cubans, subjecting the miserable, the undernourished, the unemployed—in other words, the whole island—to the appetite of a handful of rich men? What power is rubbing our noses in the dirt, while at the same time persuading us that we must accept our servitude as destiny? It's the army, he thought. The Cuban army is the worst enemy of the nation.

And why has corruption seemed to be the law itself in Cuba for the last 50 years? Each time that indignant democrats, led by a Grau (1944–48), by a Prio (1948–52), have waged a campaign against a corrupt government, against the venality of its administrators, each time that they have asked for the people's confidence and promised reforms, responsible ministers, and incorruptible functionaries, they have violated this confidence, failed to keep their promises.

Honest at first, they soon became as greedy and corrupt as those they had driven out. In taking power, they had an apprenticeship in impotence. The leaders shared titles, honors, the prestige that belonged to ministers. They quickly noted that they had not been given the prerogatives of a government. They sometimes demanded it of the large landowners. They were told, "It's yours for the taking." They pushed a door, and on the other side there were soldiers. These ministers without power saw a power that they did not administer—naked force.

Actually, they had no means of acting. The levers of command had been taken away from them. At the head of the country, they found they were just what they had been while in the opposition—talkers. Already the people were murmuring, like Polly's parrot, "Talk, talk,

that's all you know how to do." But when they uncovered the mystery, it was already too late. They would have had to resign the very day of their electoral victory. They would have been better off never to have courted the appearances of power. Hostages of the ruling class, they were turned into its accomplices in the comedy that was played for the electorate. They served as cover for the secret dictatorship of the latifundia.

In silence or in whispered conversations, young and old returned to the old Cuban dream: the island would one day be governed by honest, austere, incorruptible men. Why, despite the constant, often brutal change of political personnel, had it never happened?

In 1955, the exile, meditating in Mexico about the Cuban army, had already understood the real reasons for the corruption of Cuba. Colonies, he told himself, have at least one advantage over the semicolony. You don't encounter political corruption there for the simple reason there are no politicians to corrupt. You could always buy up the little kings—who are quite simply traitors—but the semicolony is a lie in itself since its *secret truth* is colonization. Thus, since all words lie, it is necessary to transpose all colonial transactions into a democratic language. What they call a "free contract" should really be called "unilateral obligation."

Thus, the office of the semicolonial "government," even when it is honest—which means during the first months—*already* falsifies language, twisting the words of the people. It betrays constitutionally. Treason, written into events, awaits it. When the government notices this, tired of selling itself gratuitously and against its will, it courageously assumes its office and demands a reward.

No, thought Castro, Cubans are not born robbers and embezzlers. Corruption is born from impotence and this comes from a phantom sovereignty which masks the absolute dependence of our economy. One single force prevents this mystification from being obvious to everyone—the army, a mystification in itself, since it has as its real and hidden function to abolish the power it pretends to support.

Gandhi wanted to destroy the caste system. Nehru said somewhere that this convinced partisan of non-

violence had an intuition that was really revolutionary. He looked for the cornerstone which supported the whole structure; he found it. It was the caste of the pariahs. From that time on, he lost no opportunity to attack it; he devoted all his time, all his strength to this problem, convinced that the whole system would fall when this caste crumbled into pieces.

Castro acted in the same way. The army was the cornerstone he had to break. These reflections took him along a path to a changed objective, a change no one noticed. In Havana, in Mexico, people thought he attacked Batista, when in fact, Batista, for Castro, counted for only half.

Even had the Cuban general staff taken the initiative of overthrowing the tyranny, of calling the people to arms, the army would still have remained public enemy number one. It would have corrupted these future democrats as it had their predecessors. At the right moment it would have taken out of its ranks the tyrant who would replace them.

As for the idealism for which Cuba had such a nostalgia, Castro would not have given a drop of his blood to restore it to the worm-eaten old politicians. He was risking his life to guarantee it to a new set of men and to found it on the real exercise of power—in other words, on winning back the country's independence.

He decided to return almost alone to the island to rout the 50,000 armed men who were waiting for him.

But now he recognized his error. To attempt a surprise attack in the cities where the army reigned meant, implicitly, to count on the support of certain military elements. It meant to compromise and therefore to fail. In the course of the return march which was beginning, Castro, better informed, knowing that he was launching a mortal struggle, decided to strike the enemy at his weakest point. He would fight far from the cities, in the countryside.

The earth is the enemy of the classic army; it is always too vast for the military—they get lost. In the fields, these princes are dispersed, surrounded by solitude. The posts could be attacked one by one to capture their occupants. If the general staff sent reinforcements,

what a nuisance for them! They would have to guarantee liaison and supplies, advancing step by step. The earth trembles under such heavy marching, but it never causes much trouble for the insurgents.

Castro and his companions, entrenched behind natural ramparts, would let them come. And the battalions would be cut up by the knives of the Sierras.

The war in its first phase was a spectacular flight around the mountain tops. In attacking the barracks, in waltzing his floating camp across the Sierra Maestra, Castro was following the same principle—to begin the job, and then to wait. There was one difference: this time he prepared to wait a long time.

In the beginning, he couldn't count on anyone. The first guide who offered to help them very nearly got them captured—he had sold out to the army. Several peasants helped them. I saw one of them the other day who assisted the little group and, it seems, saved it from death. He is a major, a vigorous old gray-bearded man. Looking at him one guesses that these allies from the early days belonged to the most conscious fraction of the peasant class. These men, no doubt, knew how to read and attempted to educate themselves. There were few of them in the Sierras or the higher foothills. The others were mistrustful. What did these people want? We don't know them. "And besides, they'll only succeed in creating trouble for us."

At first when they wanted to question a peasant about a troop movement or an itinerary, they had to capture him; otherwise the poor guy, seeing these suspect men appear out of the distance, would drop his spade and flee. The insurgents learned to burst out of the earth like devils, to form a circle around their man, to capture him without violence. Gently, they asked him questions that didn't always get answered, carried on a bit of propaganda, and let him run off.

However, from that moment on, the matter was settled: the Cuban revolution would either be peasant in character, or it wouldn't take place. This necessity arose out of events rather than from men, and no one could do anything about it. Far off, the cities were crushed in impotence. The countryside, even before it participated,

imposed its form on the rebellion. In choosing to attack the scattering of little rural garrisons, the rebels attacked the peasants' enemy. By their mode of life, they became peasants themselves and sought help from the peasants whom they protected.

Guerrilla warfare had its requirements: for a swift band to burst out quietly, harass the enemy, vanish, reappear to strike the next day twenty leagues away, it must be able to count without reserve on the rural population. The earth is as vast for a couple of dozen rebels as for a detachment of the regular army. They will both be completely lost there. But the solitude of the mercenary is definitive. Wounded, he will perish in the middle of the fields. If the rebel wants to win, this solitude must be provisional for him. The wilderness that the mercenary crosses without meeting a living soul must be transformed for the rebel into a swarm of allies.

Castro and his men never considered rallying the peasants by terror—it's to their honor. If there weren't other means, they would have preferred to disappear. In any event, this crime would have been the least pardonable political error. The troops of Batista terrorized the country with one result—creating a void around themselves. A rebel counterterror would have succeeded no better. On the contrary, in those first months their lives hung by a thread. The first guide's treachery had taught them that a single denunciation could have nipped the revolution in the bud. There was only one solution—to become loved. The revolution had to be entrusted to the hands of three million men.

But it would have difficulty in lifting their suspicion unless it *gave proof* that it was being carried out for them. Since the war of 1895 they had sworn not to pull any more chestnuts out of the fire for the cities. The young rebels were cityfolk—lawyers, doctors, economists, journalists. It was up to them to make this forgotten.

In order for the peasants to become rebels, the rebels became peasants. They took part in the field chores. It wasn't enough to know the needs, the poverty of the rural people. It was necessary to suffer from these hardships and at the same time to combat them. The farmer

would be that much better disposed to listen to them the more he recognized them as his own kind. A neat swing of the machete, cutting the stalks like a pro, will do more than a long speech.

Guerrilla warfare, by requiring these new bonds between the revolutionaries and the people, finally became known by its real name: the people's war.

Castro's thought goes from itself to the ensemble, from the part to the whole. He rapidly seized this sudden reversal of perspectives—the symbiosis of the people and their defenders would make the rebels loved, but not necessarily the revolution. He had decided to fight the regular army so as to have a free hand to carry out the agrarian reform. But he noticed in the neighborhoods that he wouldn't win the total support of the masses unless the revolution were to become their common interest. In short, he had to beat the army in order to carry out reforms, but he had immediately to carry out—and not promise—reforms if he wanted to beat the army. The circle was vicious only in appearance. In passing from the abstract project to reality, he simply noticed that no one else could change the life of these unfortunates, that it would be changed every day by themselves. Thus, he set out to revive their revolt, to have them discover their own needs. They quickly understood: latifundias, tenant farming, limited jobs, single crop—in a short time they saw these as the origin of their troubles. Reform wasn't presented as a gratuitous gift of the future government to the people. The urgency and national necessity of it was ceaselessly explained to them. They weren't told: the country will be generous toward you. They were told: your loss is the nation's loss. For the first time since the beginning of the century they felt at home on the island, like citizens.

The reform venture gave them confidence in the rebel army; the military successes gave them confidence in the reform. Since they were fighting for it, each skirmish brought its fulfillment closer. Better yet, each skirmish was the march of *Reform*.

Once it knows its causes and its requirements, necessity of itself gets to the bottom of things. Awareness, still negative, grew rapidly and became general. In this

new phase of the war, the peasants were transformed. These meek people took over responsibility for the plans of the insurgents, made them their own demands, and, in a certain fashion, it was they who would "radicalize" the rebels.

Agrarian reform—that was guerrilla warfare. But guerrilla warfare was the real reform. It was the people, supporting the *putsch*, absorbing it and changing these middle-class rebels into revolutionary peasants.

7 M-26-7

IN Cuba, everybody distinguishes the rebels (combat soldiers) from the resistance fighters (the underground militants in the cities). I also learned to make the distinction. At first, however, I didn't recognize the difference. Clean-shaven or bearded, I thought, they had taken the same option, run the same risks, shown the same loyalty that earned them the same cares, the same enemies. Nevertheless, my innocent tourist chatter, ordinarily heard with respect, sometimes provoked an uneasiness. An angel was losing his halo.

One day I was asked, in the course of a press conference, if I found some points in common between the Cuban revolution and the Chinese revolution. After having insisted on the differences, I spoke of the semi-colonial regime which characterized the island during the time of Batista and China during the time of Chiang Kai-shek. Everyone seemed in agreement.

But when I suggested, without malice, that both revolutions appeared to me to be peasant in character, that the leaders had in each case liberated the cities after a people's war that they had won in the mountains and fields, several of my friends told me firmly that I was wrong.

The revolution, according to the clean-shaven, sprang from the city. And Castro himself, as bearded as he

might be, had studied in the capital and assumed the vocation of a city dweller—in former times he had practiced law. And then, I didn't give enough credit to the underground resistance that was organized in Santiago, Havana, and Santa Clara. The peasants, my friends added, came later.

On several occasions I was a witness to identical discussions. Some maintained that the peasants had fought little or badly; others, on the contrary, argued that the cities had done nothing, that the victory of the insurgents was due only to the support of the countryside.

I kept quiet. I felt, under the words, not a disagreement, but a difference of attitude in the face of a deeper, more real problem. Today, I think that I have understood the meaning: the underground fighters and the rebel soldiers have in common the desire to carry their program out completely. The present unites them. And the future. But they don't have the same memories.

Starting in 1957, contacts were made—the insurgents of the Sierra got in touch with friends in Santiago, Santa Clara and the capital. It was necessary to set up the underground organization.

Thus was born, in all the urban centers, a secret movement which was called M-26-7, that is to say, the Movement of the 26th of July. On July 26, four years earlier, Castro had assaulted the Moncada barracks. M-26-7 was defined in relation to him. But by the very name it had chosen, it affirmed its loyalty to an intellectual, a city dweller, a putschist; in short, to someone who no longer existed.

Be that as it may, on one point I have to grant that those of my friends who pleaded the cause of the cities were right. It was there that the influence of the Sierra was first felt.

After several months, M-26-7 already had its martyrs, though the countryside had not yet done anything to break away from its lethargy. Nothing could be more normal. The peasants, duped too often, were suspicious. It took time to convince them. Garroted by the cops, by the mercenaries, the cities, by their very weakness, produced the largest number of rebels.

One of our best friends, Oltulsky, at 27 a minister in

the government,* joined the resistance as a result of a religious crisis which alienated him from his family and himself. He began to read, passionately—everything he could lay his hands on. He wasn't interested in social science, history, or economics. Religion and metaphysics were his sole concern—until the day he understood that you could understand nothing of the latter subjects without also studying the former.

He went from book to book, consulting the best brains of Cuba; he was disappointed by all, not knowing exactly what he was seeking. This experience left him with a generalized uneasiness—an imprecise but living distaste for his island. He always ended up rejecting systems. He clearly felt that they answered neither his own problems nor those of the nation. But each of his readings brought him new reasons—still abstract—for condemning the dictatorship.

Many of his comrades of that period, and still more young compatriots who were unknown to him, had arrived by different paths at the same negative conclusion: "There is something rotten in the state of Cuba." The agitation of this enlightened petty bourgeoisie is what I call "the politics of the dead rat." You smell a putrid odor. You look for the rat's corpse. But in the cities, the forest of effects hides the causes—the dead animal always escapes detection.

Back at the beginning of 1957, these young men didn't place their unreserved confidence in Castro. Though they compared him to José Martí, the national hero, nevertheless they also considered him a bit tarnished. That was because the history of the island came down to the struggles of a courageous bourgeoisie against the feudal lords. Always beaten, the bourgeoisie had nevertheless left their imprint on the century, and the young bourgeois intellectuals of 1957 recognized themselves in this bourgeois history.

The history of the people lacked subtlety. It shocks the gentle spirits by its vulgarity. It gets down to brass tacks, that's all. Weren't Fidel's tactics, they asked them-

* He now works in the Industrialization Department in the INRA.

selves, too gross? Could they be effective against the enemy, even if he was Batista?

They didn't reflect for long. To their great credit, they became involved even without faith. When the opportunity finally presented itself to get organized, to work in harmony, to find a common outlet for their anger, they grabbed it by the tail.

To change these powerless negations into a single irresistible refusal, it was necessary to begin by saying yes. Yes to Castro. They united behind this slightly troublesome, far-off archer who was shooting arrows in the mountains. It was only a myth—the symbol of national unity and of rediscovered energy. Castro served as a pretext for putting aside the rivalries, the cliques, the bitterness, the reciprocal mistrust.

M-26-7 had two functions: it pumped the cities to buy arms for the insurgents, and it provided for agitation of the urban masses by underground bulletins, by several demonstrations which struck without leaving traces. The kidnaping of the race-track driver, Fangio, in the hall of his hotel on the eve of an international meet was conceived and executed by the July Movement [to embarrass Batista].

For two years the Cuban urbanites agitated for, collected, bought, and convoyed arms. They even found the time to recruit. We followed the route that Oltulsky "did" and "re-did" several times a month, from Santa Clara to Trinidad to the foot of the Sierras. In 1958, this road was patrolled by police cars and soldiers. They stopped automobiles. Pretexts had to be found at each barrier. There was only one way to leave the main highway—take advantage of the change of guards. Everything had to be calculated to be at the right spot at the right time.

Oftentimes Oltulsky was accompanied by another resistance fighter. They used to telephone to an inn situated on the road, not far from the Sierras, and order a roast suckling pig. With them these two very young men used to take their very young wives, have them sit down at the prepared table, and then take their auto "for a little spin before the meal." Then they would plunge into the mountains by back roads, meet a rebel, indicate to

him the arrival of arms, and take the new order for arms.

"Evidently," he told me with a trace of regret, "we didn't have the heroism of the rebels." I find him rather modest.

The police and army killed 20,000 men from 1953 to 1959, and most of them in the last two years—1,000 in the Sierra in the ultimate battles; 19,000 in the cities. The M-26-7 paid very dearly for the pride that it bestowed on the capital and several large important towns.

Naturally, the police and army used torture. Nothing scientific, of course—we're talking about an underdeveloped country. But they applied themselves; they had models; they did what they could. Franqui (Director of the newspaper, *Revolucion*) doesn't have very fond memories of a completely bestial, workmanlike corporal punishment: dry, rhythmical beating at the base of the skull.

"I thought I would go crazy."

One of the most popular women of the revolution was arrested with her brother and her fiancé. She never saw them again; but one day they brought her two plates. On one of them were the eyes of the first; on the other, the testicles of the second. They castrated with pleasure. The interrogators were so conscientious that the patient died in the middle of the session without having answered. They had firing squads in the prison courtyards. They came to get Franqui seven times to execute him. In the cold of dawn, he waited. They took him back; it was only a joke. Many of my new friends underwent such "questioning." They were able to compare the procedures, the techniques.

Those who had the luck to slip through the mesh of the daily-tightening net were awakened by anguish at dawn. Under this regime, nerves were worn thin. Everyone told me, "Victory didn't wipe out memories so quickly. We're still strained, on edge. It will take years for us to regain our equilibrium."

For my part, I attach a higher price to such difficult courage than to military heroism. It struggles alone and without witness against an all-powerful enemy who wants to reduce his victim to abjection. And yet, Oltulsky and twenty others spoke to me with humility about the rebels. And certainly, it was the men of the Sierras who

had the first courage, that which counts. They were the ones who commanded, who began, who held on.

Without them, everything would collapse. For a year, they held the island at arm's length. But when the police, crazy with fear, multiplied the tortures and murders, why didn't the declared violence of the regime equalize the risks and merits of all the insurgents?

In my opinion, the reason is simple. In setting itself up, the M-26-7 accepted, of course, the subordination of the underground resistance to the armed insurrection, but in the beginning this chain was weak—the mountain rebels counted for so little! They were so far away, so few in number! If they fell into an ambush, if they succumbed, the young bourgeoisie could imagine that the organization, spread into all the cities, would survive, would carry on the task to a successful conclusion. But they didn't succumb. Their numbers grew. They won their first victories. It became manifest that they had assumed the task of delivering the country and that they were capable of leading it to a successful conclusion. Within the insurrection itself the relationship of forces was reversed; the M-26-7 had an unpleasant experience—the subordination which it had accepted in principle became a reality in fact. The organization would have only a relative existence.

It wasn't anyone's fault. Castro, high up in the Sierras, discouraged sabotage and terrorism, the sole resource of hunted resistance fighters, not to take away from the young bourgeois the means of carrying on a real struggle, but because of a simple conviction. The workers, not very numerous in the M-26-7, would do little sabotaging. Terrorism didn't work. Several students attempted to seize the presidential palace where Batista lived. They were killed on the spot or executed the next day.

Thus, Castro only added his voice to the sentence that the revolution itself had passed on its city partisans: they were indispensable auxiliaries who were not to alter their function—money, arms, nothing more.

And these young city people, despite their total adherence to the revolution, were far from being as radi-

cal as Castro himself. Or rather, they still held the views that Fidel had long since gone beyond.

In 1958, relations between resistance fighters and rebels became strained in a sometimes dramatic way. Contacts were too rare to discover their differences, but the leaders of each group didn't meet without uneasiness. Oltulsky organized the supplying of the rebels in the province of Las Villas. He was advised, toward the end of the war, that "Ché" Guevara, leading his troops, was heading for the Sierras by forced march. No fixed meeting place. The two men were to meet somewhere in the mountains.

They met. Stormily. In 45 days, Guevara had had 11 meals. He was in a foul humor and didn't hide his mistrust of the young man who promised him food. The latter, for his part, having labored hard and done his best, was irritated by this disdain, fearing that hunger might push the rebels to violence. He thought he had fallen on an adventurer; the other, on a counterrevolutionary.

Both were mistaken. Radical in his decision, violent as a soldier in the execution, Guevara was the most cultivated and, after Castro, one of the most lucid minds of the revolution. I have seen him. You would have to be crazy to think that the kindness and humor which he showed his guests could have been put on for the day. Despite their intermittent character, his sentiments are certainly his own.

But in 1958, when he saw Oltulsky, nothing disposed him to make concessions—neither hunger, nor that somber courage which prefers to envisage the worst and to prepare for it.

Oltulsky, younger, struck with respect before this already legendary fighter, but just as stubborn as he, was opposed to Guevara by the experience of the urban terror, by the situation, and by human relations which had formed him, rather than by interests or ideas. In the cities, you learn caution, patience, discretion. He didn't refuse to go all the way, but it had to be by stages, slowly. In short, by those habits which form character, he was more reformist than revolutionary, although he had the same objectives as the revolution.

As night fell, the meeting touched on the agrarian re-

form. Oltulsky hoped that the land would be divided up among the peasants. But his prudence, his bourgeois wisdom—which believes that reforms are more solid when they are introduced progressively—his fear that the revolution would pass all stops and gallop on unknown roads, a deep concern for the national interest, and perhaps a very old vestige of a very light disdain which the cities proclaim for the illiterate of the countryside in all countries—all these motives led him to propose waiting. They would carry out the division right after victory. Each one would receive his lot, but he who worked the land would be only a usufructuary. He would become the landowner at the end of two years if he had maintained production above a previously established level (in general, the average level of the preceding years).

Guevara was clearly angry. If the land belonged to the peasants, give it to them. Immediately, and without conditions. By what right did the petty bourgeoisie—who understood nothing about farm work—take these scornful precautions against the farmers? Because city people knew how to read? The most profound culture is changed into dead pages, into words, when one puts it in the presence of a real revolutionary conscience. The peasants merit complete confidence. They are carrying out a revolution. They know it. Therefore, production won't fall.

The two men were still arguing in the morning. They put so much heat into it that each one unintentionally proved to the other that he would remain his brother in spite of everything. These two intellectuals, disagreeing over everything, demonstrated their profound accord, their common taste for ideas and argumentation.

And then, this pressing, unrelenting argument was an inquiry each was making about the other. The rebel and the resistance fighter followed their investigation to the end; each thought, looking at the other, "Better learn to get along with this strange animal."

Apart from that, these two men of action consumed this sleepless night as intellectuals, that is to say, as a pure loss. Neither one had the capacity to settle the matter. The question was definitively resolved at the beginning of the summer of 1959, when the reform was

promulgated, and we shall see that the event proved that both men were right at the same time.

In 1958, in any case, the debate was cut by the arrival of the supply trucks. Guevara cheered up; his men ate. Oltulsky mounted in his esteem. Actually, in the discussion itself the rebel had found reasons to appreciate the resistance fighter. The latter, while maintaining his slight differences, his reservations, had attempted above all *to understand* his adversary. He had proved his open-mindedness and his intelligence in recognizing the firmness of the rebel position.

This Guevara had been made by the war. It had stamped its own intransigence on him. The revolution had given him his sense of urgency, his speed. Older than Oltulsky, he appeared younger. Facing him, the resistance fighter discovered that his taste for slow and continual progression was perhaps only an adopted idea. He was restrained, stopped, perhaps, by prejudices which came to him from the preceding generation. All the sensitivity of the city dweller that the young man had pampered in himself he ended up by seeing as only obsolete ideas, or worse, as the clever hope of avoiding reforms by delays.

He won. He put his sense of nuance in the service of radicalism. His luck was to be an intermediary, to have direct contact with the rebel leaders before they took power. To rejoin them and march in step with them, he needed only two virtues which are the most elementary and the most rare: intelligence and good will. Good will certainly wasn't missing in the M-26-7. Nor intelligence. What had to be deplored, above all, was the small number of contacts. The unanimous revolution against Batista was divided in fragments which developed separately, without knowing each other. As the "beards" became stronger and menaced the cities more directly, the right wing of the resistance became more indecisive. These "beards" were sharers, at the head of a peasant uprising.

Similarly, on the extreme left there were reservations. Many youths told me that they had seen in Castro at first the son of a large landowner who, relying on a reactionary peasantry, was preparing to exercise a rightist

dictatorship. In short, what did Castro want? Who was he?

One of his boyhood comrades, at the end of 1958, waiting with everyone in Havana for the arrival of the victor, recalled a nervous somber adolescent, driven on by relentless pride toward the most difficult tasks. It used to suffice for an undertaking to be reputed to be impossible for him to throw himself into it.

Isn't that the makings of a tyrant, thought his friend? He was telling me of his uneasiness the other day, and said to me, "What reassured me, you see, is that the most difficult task in Cuba is to exercise power without selling out or becoming a tyrant."

8 THE BEARDS TAKE HAVANA — "DEATH TO ABSTRACT PRINCIPLES!"

THE weeks which followed the Liberation, at the beginning of 1959, were weeks of gaiety and of unanimity. Although in that period, for reasons which we shall see, Castro was not in the government, he appeared in the eyes of all as the man of unity. He wanted it so and did nothing to dissipate the mystery which surrounded his intentions. The right, the left, the parties, the unions, asked themselves about him. What was he going to do?

One thing is sure. He reacted forcefully against those who threatened to break the unity of Cuban society.

This was noticed from the first days, apropos of the Good Lord. They had put back into effect the Constitution of 1940. God was mentioned in the preamble. The ministers thought it wise to remove Him.

When Castro learned of this, he fell into a violent anger. No matter what the convictions of the members of the government were, they couldn't touch this venerable word which had figured in the fundamental text for twenty years and which everyone could read without

offending the priests and their faithful worshipers, and consequently, without breaking the unity of the country.

The word "God" makes a body with constitutional law. It doesn't get in the way. In taking it up, the revolution doesn't declare itself Christian. In suppressing it, it proclaims itself Atheist.

In brief, during this short respite, all measures were taken with the view of consolidating the union. They had brought resistance fighters as well as rebels into the government: resistance—Oltulsky, minister of communications; resistance—Pinos, economy minister; resistance—the minister of commerce.

These precautions did not prevent tension from being born in the very heart of the unanimity. The Havana populace had received the "beards" as brothers. But the "beards" were not too inclined to fraternize.

These peasant soldiers, these soldiers-become-peasants, carried into the cities their warlike austerity and country moralism. Several years earlier, with the same defiance, the rural army of Mao had camped in the streets of Shanghai, the corrupted city, the victim and accomplice of the whites.

And then, certain Havana citizens demonstrated, in the first days, a suspect eagerness. We French also recall those uniforms smelling of moth balls that one saw appear in September 1944 on the streets of Paris.

They stole assistance from the victory. The old political personnel put in a good word for themselves to the victors, letting it be known that they would accept the burden of power if it were ever so slightly offered to them. The rebels and resistance fighters called these new friends "the Movement of the Second of January." The first of the year was the date that will always be celebrated as the anniversary of the Liberation.

Certainly, the rigidity of certain rebels—which was perhaps only timidity—the disappointment of certain resistance people who had hoped to live in familiarity with the liberators and who sometimes found themselves reduced to respecting them from afar—all these light frictions could only have been produced on a foundation of enthusiasm. Defiance and even melancholy were attitudes of living a real and common union. To deplore

the aloofness of the rebel soldiers, it was first necessary to see them as future leaders, to accept their authority in advance.

Sometimes, however, slight wounds become inflamed. From the failure to find a common language, ambiguities gave way to real hostilities. Or rather, quite simply, contacts were lost.

Fortunately, the revolution had this exceptional piece of luck: No one could put forward a group or a program to replace the revolutionary group and program—except two or three of the parties that honored the individual courage of their active members but had been discredited by their general silence and inertia, and except for a fleeing tyrant who was refused asylum by every country in the world except Portugal. This *de facto* legitimacy had to be exploited to the hilt. At present it was necessary to conquer the city population—and to begin with, to satisfy the *unanimous* demands.

There were two permanent complaints in the cities that united laborers and white-collar workers without distinction of class. Even before they received their salaries, rent and electricity had consumed half the amount. This could not go on.

They were already saying that when Fidel was studying law in Havana. That's what they were saying 15 years earlier, and even before that. It had always been that way. But the needs of the people are the measure of their confidence. During the war the revolutionary leaders had known the pressure of circumstances; starting with victory, they became acquainted with popular pressure.

They suddenly announced an arbitrary 50% cut in rents, nothing less. The motives of the decision are clear. The government, scarcely installed in this city which still remained strange, could not permit itself to deceive the people. They had to act and not promise, to deliver the poor from a crushing burden, to give back to Cuban small business the money that was marching off to the U.S.A. to pay for the cars and frigidaire or that they stupidly reinvested in building construction projects. They alleviated one of the burdens of the national econ-

omy, and in lowering the rent, they turned capital back toward industry.

The majority was in agreement, but in spite of everything, unanimity gave way at the edges. We have already seen that building absorbed all of Cuban savings, not only the profits of the rich, but the economizing of the middle classes. The bourgeoisie thought that its revenues were immutable, and here a stroke of the pen cut them in half. They were struck with fear. During several moments of panic, appalled Havana saw a red specter: Bolshevism in the Caribbean islands.

There was less visible emotion when the government required the telephone and electricity companies to lower their rates. This time everyone profited, the employer as well as the employee, since costs were lowered. And then, they were taking the people's money from the pockets of foreign capitalists. The underprivileged classes frankly rejoiced. The new government had done in several weeks what its predecessors hadn't been able to do. It had dared to put a hand on American profits, and the heavens hadn't fallen on their heads. It *was* possible "to change their lives."

But among the bourgeoisie, uneasiness was growing. These measures revealed a tendency toward managerialism that the group in power didn't hide and that circumstances justified to all—at least provisionally. But they thought they saw there a notification of extreme decisions. The rebels would empty the banks and socialize the means of production.

Already people thought they could distinguish a right, a left, a center within the cabinet. Guevara, Minister of the Economy, seemed even more dreaded, a madman. This reputation stayed with him for a long time. When he was named director of the National Bank, quite some time after the troubled period that I'm describing, people stood on line to withdraw their savings. It took no longer than 24 hours to reassure them. Since nothing happened, the bourgeoisie brought back its money.

The attitude of the government concerning the workers' grievances was not of such a nature as to dissipate confusion. To tell the truth, there couldn't be any question of adopting any other attitude, but the bourgeoisie

didn't find it suitable. The trade unions—who could blame them?—wanted to profit from the new regime, to win back the rights acquired under the Republic, and lost, in part, under the tyranny.

They accepted the revolution, but remained reserved. The government appeared suspect to them because they didn't succeed in defining it, still less in classifying it. In this uncertainty they found a reason to carry out a test of force immediately, while the young power, still too young to have produced its shell and its apparatus of constraint, kept the fragility of childhood.

They counted on drawing two advantages from this sudden attack: first, a workers' victory; and then, in the first contact, the government would discover what class and what interests it served under the myth of National Unity.

They began agitation in January, and continued it without letup for several months. Strikes hit all around the capital. They struck one sector, then another, but in nearly every case, the entire city was directly or indirectly paralyzed.

The government arbitrated. Most often it advised the employers to give in. Not through weakness, but because it had the mission of maintaining unity. And then, born in rural misery, the revolution felt ill at ease in the cities and asked for support from the most exploited workers. The leaders felt disarmed—not by the strike, though they had neither the desire nor the means to break it—but by needs, by the trouble that had provoked the strike.

The middle classes felt the harassment of the strikes to the point of exasperation. They had done everything for the rebels and for the country; the workers, they said, had done nothing at all. On top of everything else, these merchants, these small industrialists, found themselves the natural allies of the regime since Castro intended to defend Cuba against the invasion of continental products. Why sacrifice them each time to these turbulent wage-earners? Besides, what were these rebels thinking? Where were their heads? Formerly they spoke only of agrarian reform; today they were throwing themselves into trade unionism with the same passion. What

was serious in all these stories? What was propaganda and demagoguery?

Each day one minister or another reaffirmed the common goal: to produce more. Did the government think it could achieve this while tolerating these disengagements, these constant vexations, these days of lost work?

The profound motive of their uneasiness was uncertainty. Habituated to the entrenched regimes of the East and West, the middle classes asked the decisive questions: Liberalism or socialism? Democracy or dictatorship? They received no answer.

Still inebriated with their reconquered liberty, they began to see the ambiguous signs of their destiny in speeches and in the press. The same people made two contradictory reproaches to the government: "They divert us with solemn declarations, and during this time, they quietly install communism." "They don't know what they want; they are improvising; there isn't one who can say today what they will do tomorrow."

Up to the spring of 1959, these observations were heard everywhere, not without an appearance of reason. As a result, many of the revolutionaries have a strong fear of passing for improvisers.

What confounded the Cubans was that the revolution covered up the country's infantile disease which broke out toward the end of the winter under the form of a crisis—fortunately benign—of legalism.

Urrutia, the President of the Republic, had earned exile and glory because when he was a judge during the time of Batista, he legalized the insurrection by his decisions. The tyranny of Batista, he said, is illegitimate. Therefore, the insurrection is legitimate. It was the argument of a lawyer.

Without ever having seen him, the rebels decided, on their mountain peak, to offer him the presidency of the future Republic. He came to the Sierras. Castro spoke to him at length, and left him, dismayed. He awaited a man and had seen only a principle.

At any rate, it was too late to renege on a choice that had already been communicated to the foreign press. Fidel knew that principles are abstract, dictatorial, inflexible. It augured so ill for the future government that,

not being able to remove Urrutia, he preferred to exclude himself. There would always be time to re-enter after the inevitable catastrophe. The decision was necessary, but it was at the source of the Cuban stupor.

From January 1, 1959 on, there was, in an apartment of the Havana Hilton Hotel (now Havana Libre), a commander of the rebel army who was called Fidel Castro and who seemed to be unattached. In the buildings of the old city, however, a rigid man of law presided over the Council of Ministers. Urrutia, during his presidency, was legality itself, in its most formal and most tyrannical universality.

"I suppress," he said, "the gaming houses, whorehouses, casinos, slot machines."

The very young ministers approved. The Havana bourgeoisie favored all medication which would cure the city of its shameful disease. Decree signed, countersigned by the President.

Starting the next day, a disturbed crowd invaded the Hilton, piled into the elevators, climbed running up the stairs, entered Castro's room without any formality. They were the employees of the gambling houses, with their families. They cried out that they were being slaughtered. Weren't 700,000 unemployed enough? Was it necessary to throw all the workers into the street, from the cigarette girl to the croupier?

Threatened, the prostitutes didn't go to the Hilton, but wrote dignified letters in which they demanded back the right to exercise their profession.

Castro called the ministers together within the hour. They left the presidential palace, the Council, and Urrutia, crossed the city, and found their real chief white with anger in an American palace. Fidel took pleasure in explaining his thought to them. They had become, he told them, the accomplices of an imbecilic and inhuman moralism that risked capsizing the revolution. Suppress gambling? Good. On condition that the laid-off personnel be retrained and requalified.

But *how* to retrain them? How to requalify them when industry doesn't exist. They could worry about wiping out gambling when the unemployed had been reabsorbed. That wouldn't be tomorrow. As for the prostitutes,

nearly all of them came from the countryside. Too many children, their families didn't nourish them; they either had to sell themselves or die.

"We will really suppress prostitution when we will have suppressed peasant poverty."

In Havana, to order women of easy virtue not to offer themselves to customers is to talk hot air. Prostitution would pass bag and baggage into an underworld operation.

The ministers, dismayed, returned to their ministries, to their cares; then, at the first Council that followed, they endeavored, with infinite delicacy, to make Urrutia understand Castro's point of view.

The magistrate listened without anger, but he was unmoved. Morality forbade that one could win or lose gold for having piled coins on a corner of a table.

"Besides," he said, "it's quite simple. I gave my word."

It seemed, in effect, that in exile, drunk with glory, he had made promises that no one had asked him to.

Castro ended the ministers' shuttle by imposing his law. He couldn't stand compromising a popular revolution by deliberately giving it an increase in unemployment. They would do away with the slot machines, which gave work to no one and robbed the Cuban pesos for the profit of continental gangs. They would maintain the national lottery, but would transform it. The games would be kept, but the State would take charge of the gambling houses and casinos. It would get the profits and pay the personnel.

As for the prostitutes, let them remain. In this first revolutionary phase, in the moment when the new government took inventory, discovering the heritage of evils and wounds that the old regime had left it, all that one could do was to suppress the exploiters of these girls—the pimps who pretended to protect them, the cops who were paid off.

This conflict seems significant to me. As often happens after great popular movements, there was a two-headed power. The real authority wasn't legal; the legal authority wasn't real. And the legalistic government, in deciding on its principles, committed the same error as

its predecessors in 1949, in 1933. It fought the effects instead of laying the blame on the causes.

Prostitution and gambling were effects.

Urrutia, a Jacobin bourgeois, inflexible with his principles, anxious to lead the cities to virtue, envisaged without hostility, but without passion, the deep transformations of Cuban society. It wasn't his concern. In every country, lawyers, judges, other bourgeois intellectuals, make an effort to be intransigent when ideas are made into plans in order to mask their hesitations before deeds.

The Cuban revolution was still embarrassed in its contradictions. It was afraid, I imagine, to throw itself into the unknown, to become unraveled in things and to give itself its own law, when the people of Havana already were no longer doubtful. The workers and the housewives invaded the skyscraper section, besieged the Hilton, and exposed their demands to Castro.

The latter understood that it was time to assume power. The ministers and Urrutia named him head of the government. The Liberation was finally going to be transformed into a revolution.

9 INRA—THE AGRARIAN REFORM

MAY 17, 1959, was the day of truth for all Cubans. The government promulgated the agrarian reform. Practical, detailed, realizable without delay, the provisions of the law were more radical than all the preceding indications. From the proclamation date on, foreigners—either as representatives of an association or even in their own right—would no longer have the right to acquire the slightest parcel of national soil. The latifundias were suppressed. No one must hold more than 30 *caballerias* (1,000 acres).

Furthermore, it was necessary to fulfill one condition: the land, up to this limit, would be conceded to its actual

owner providing he worked it; if he lived from his rents, it would henceforth belong to those who worked for him. Beyond this limit, the State would expropriate the property and redivide the surplus *caballerias* among the peasants or agricultural workers.

No one was permitted to own both a cane plantation and a sugar factory. If it should happen, the planter would keep the factory and lose the plantation. When an individual or a company suffers an expropriation, the State compensates them with bonds. The recovered lands became the object of a national redistribution. To this end the government created a special office: INRA, the National Institute of Agrarian Reform. It was established in principle that a holding of two *caballerias* could nourish a family of five persons. INRA was to supervise the distribution of these lots, adapting this principle to particular cases.

However, this parceling threatened to destroy certain crops. Whether or not there was a revolution, cane, in particular, would always require large open spaces, and teamwork. Cutting up the plantations would have as a certain result the break-up of production. The law stipulated that the estate would be divided up into lots or that it would be transferred undivided to a co-operative, according to the interests of the nation. In effect, it was the crop which decided. It claimed from the INRA either individual workers or team-members.

Such are the essential features of the agrarian reform. But the Cuban government ceaselessly wanted to explain it, to convince. In actuality, it had no force other than the adherence of the governed. It is for this reason that it adopted the habit of having each law preceded by a "pedagogical" preamble. In these texts, most of which are of an admirable clarity and conciseness, the objective situation, its dangers and its requirements are exposed to the citizens. The aims which are necessary are indicated, as are the means of attaining them. To understand the necessity of the decisions taken one only has to read.

In France, no one is supposed to be *ignorant* of the law. In Cuba, everyone is supposed to *understand* it. A new breed of men, many of whom were law students or

lawyers, disgusted by juridical formalism, wanted to found their decrees on reason. A new language is being created on the island, joining to the beautiful and noble resonances of Spain the precise and passionate sharpness of a new rationalism.

Of these texts which mark a date in the history of the Cuban language and in the universal history of human institutions, the most profound and least forgettable is the preamble to the agrarian reform. All the chips were placed on it. In these several pages, Castro could have won or lost everything. He won.

The whereases and therefore of the law represent quite simply—in these times when the peoples are everywhere bursting asunder the worm-eaten worthless rocks of colonialism—the charter of underdeveloped countries.

Unfortunately, I can give here only some extracts of this capital introduction which should be translated into all languages. Here are the passages which opened the eyes of the Cubans:

The agrarian reform has two principal objectives:

a) To facilitate the planting or the extension of new crops with the view of furnishing raw materials to industry, satisfying the food needs of the nation, increasing the export of agricultural products and, reciprocally, the import of foreign products which are essential to us.

b) To develop the interior market (family, domestic) by raising the purchasing power of the rural population. In other words, increase the national demand in order to develop the industries atrophied by an overly restrained consumption, or in order to create those which, for lack of customers, were never able to get started among us.

Castro's merit and his strength of thought are revealed in these few, simple lines. Until that month of May, everyone in Cuba considered the agrarian reform to be a negative measure which had as its aim the destruction of the old regime. Now, from the first reading of the preamble, it was noticed that the negative moment of the revolution had disappeared. Nowhere did the text appeal

to popular resentment. It defined the reform as the fundamental organization of the productive forces and of the relationships of production.

Nothing was hidden, however. The preamble concealed neither misery nor social injustice, but it mattered little to name those responsible for this situation. If it recalled the painful situation of the rural classes, it was out of a simple concern for efficiency. In order to increase the total production of the nation, it was necessary to raise everyone's productivity—by the mechanization of agriculture, of course, as soon as it would be possible. Tomorrow, not today. But first, by curing the peasant of his three endemic illnesses: poverty, disease, ignorance.

The reader was won over because he discovered, in the preamble of the first revolutionary law, the meaning and originality of the Cuban revolution: destroying the old regime came down to placing the first stone of the new.

To chase out the evil rulers and return to the nation those millions of acres that had systematically been left fallow meant to provide with one blow the means for diversifying crops. Dividing these uncultivated lands among the peasants meant diversification was already realized. These new owners would be forced by the scantiness of their estates to exploit them to the hilt. With individual property, intensive cultivation would replace the carelessness of extensive work. In breaking with a single blow the proud violence of the great lords and their servile submission to foreign producers, alimentary independence was given on the spot to the nation. This fertile island had acquired the right to produce its subsistence. From now on they would plant twice as much rice. By the harvest of 1960, Cuba would already have ceased to be a tributary of the foreigner for this basic food.

For other foodstuffs, the change would be still more striking. In the 1959–1960 season, the battle of the tomato was fought and won. In this sector, not content to satisfy the domestic demand, the producers would compete in Latin America with Cuba's former suppliers.

But, above all, the government said in proper terms that the raising of the rural standard of living was not *primarily* a measure of justice, but an effort to set the

national economy going again by altering its social structures.

Owing to the absence of industry, the island had known 50 years of atrophy. Industry couldn't come into existence owing to the absence of an interior market. In England, during a depression, I recall having seen on every wall this urgent exhortation: "Buy British." But whom, before 1959, would one have exhorted on Havana walls to "buy Cuban"? The rich scoffed at the island; the poor didn't have a sou. I have indicated the consequence: the poor grew dollars by the sweat of their brows; they gathered them and gave them to the rich who sent them to the producers of the U.S.A.

Currency leaked out. The rich received autos, frigidaire. But the Cuban nation was never paid. No matter what the work was, Cuba grew poorer each day.

The reform provided the solution. The possibility for the smallest category of consumers to ruin all the others by sumptuous expenditures abroad was suppressed. The reform had the advantage of reducing the way of life of these parasites and, consequently, their purchases from abroad. To completely discourage the rich from betrayal, the government furthermore imposed crushing taxes on luxury imports. These two complementary measures (expropriations, import duties) were ligatures. They compressed the open artery, stopping the hemorrhage. This would have been nothing, however, if the same law, by improving the lot of the poor, had not concurrently changed the condition of the workers to create a domestic demand and stimulate industrialization.

We mustn't believe in Santa Claus. The Cubans know that industrialization will be slow, that it must be carried out prudently. Capital, factories, machines, in Cuba as elsewhere, have their habits, their inertia. No matter what the demand, one can't count on making factories sprout from the ground. Cuba wants to renounce its colonial economy. That means that to the classical structures of underdevelopment (industries of extraction with heavy foreign investments, agricultural production) the government proposes to add an essential sector by developing industries of transformation.

But one has to be modest, even for a long period. Cuba

will produce its consumption goods. It can't even dream, today, of producing its machine tools, its equipment. That would be a useless and unfortunate burden for a population of six or seven million inhabitants. Heavy industry will thus stay where it is—abroad.

But the independence of a country doesn't require in any case the suppression of its imports. If it breaks away from the preferential regime which chains it to a single supplier—that is to say, to a single customer—if it equalizes the balance of foreign trade by subordinating the growth of purchases to those of sales, if it blocks useless acquisitions with taxes, and if it rigorously determines which imports are in the national interest; it will found its living sovereignty on a strategy at the world level, always ready to guarantee its freedom of maneuver by overthrowing alliances and by changing customers.

Previously, the large landowners forbade by one and the same blow diversification of crops and industrialization. The reform made the Cubans understand that the immediate realization of the first would soon prime the second.

It didn't lie. Diversification of crops and growth of domestic demand are one and the same. Under the pressure of the rural masses, the machines which had stopped from a lack of customers were set back into motion. Today, more than a year after the victory of the rebels, 125,000 unemployed have found work.*

The revolution, in that month of May, revealed its radicalism. It broke up the large estates. But few people were frightened. After the preamble of the reform, it was obvious that Cuba's situation alone had imposed this carving job.

The new group didn't care about ideology. Certain leaders simply knew nothing of the subject; to others—Oltulsky, the young Minister of Communications, for example—all theories seemed worthy of interest though none was satisfactory. Too general or too particular, the best were found wanting. They had not been born

* By December 1960, more than 300,000 unemployed had found work.

in Cuba; they were not founded on a study of the sugar agreements.

Without any doubt, a revolution which proclaimed itself socialist would have been strongly resisted. But the agrarian reform didn't give itself a name. And justly so. It attacked a regime of property that one hardly meets any more—unless it's in the backward countries, let's say, a feudal regime. It happens that the reconquered land is parceled out—two *caballerias* to a family. What was it doing in this case? Nothing more than the revolutions that changed the face of Europe had done a century and a half ago. It introduced bourgeois property into the fields.

In other cases—now the majority—on the contrary, the estate passed, undivided, over to a co-operative. This new prerogative seemed to be clearly inspired by the socialist experiences. In short, everything took place as if the feudal property, in disappearing, engendered the two modes of appropriation that are found everywhere today.

But the co-operative, in Cuba, was inscribed in the nature of things. Cane, in any event, needs the wide open spaces. The fallow lands of the old *latifundias*, naturally, are abolished—they are given to other growers for them to plant other crops. But the plantation itself, with its millions of green stalks, cannot be divided without pulverizing sugar production. Is one going to encumber it with 20,000 small isolated producers, opposed by competition, by interests, by diversity of tools and techniques? And how could one indicate, in this virgin forest, the frontiers of each property? There is also the factory, which passes on the orders and awaits the harvest. What good does it do to possess privately if you have to cut the stalks together and put the means of transport in common?

Cane requires the unity of a common enterprise. Formerly it was the feudal community of the destitute, of the enslaved journeymen, in debt, without land; tomorrow it will be the production co-operative.

It's not principles or opinions which count. It's the old regime itself which is transformed into a collective organization. And this for one sole reason—because the

feudal plantation, to adapt to the exigencies of sugar, was already organized as a work community.

It is Cuba's luck. One will not rediscover there the contradictions that lately bathed socialist Europe in blood. The necessity of working the land in common will not conflict, among the workers themselves, with the harsh will of possessing it individually. Reread the text of the agrarian reform. The word "co-operative" appears suddenly, not surreptitiously, without trumpets, and the law never takes the trouble to define it or to justify it. The reason is quite simple: a product of traditions and necessities, the co-operative existed before it was instituted.

What did those who visited a large estate up to 1958 find there? An empty palace, a manager, a team of agricultural workers. The palace remains empty today. The master won't return there any longer. The manager preferred to disappear or change his job. The team of workers remains, with its practical knowledge, its experience with the terrain, its tools. From one regime to the other, it assures the continuity of production. These men all know one another. They have been in pain and have suffered together. Above all, they have the habit of working together.

Since this rudimentary and traditional collectivity, rubbing shoulders for years, found itself alone on the place; since its presence there is indispensable, the reform made of it, indivisibly, the usufructuary of the estate that it cultivated. There it was, baptized "co-operative."

Practically, it was a capital transformation. The group will sell the harvest to the sugar factory without middlemen, and, at least in principle, will realize the whole profit.

Before 1959, the journeymen bought their provisions at the nearest village grocery. This gracious merchant, alone in the country without a competitor within 20 leagues, took himself to be a monopolist and fixed prices with a sovereign authority. Taking advantage of the seasonal unemployment, he didn't disdain to practice usury, either. By these two procedures he easily obtained the money of the poor, but not their sympathy. The new State decided to wipe out these petty profiteers with

competition. It ordered INRA to facilitate the production co-operatives by organizing the national co-operative of consumers.

"People's Stores" appeared in each plantation, nearest the workers. Articles of bare necessity were found there at cost (plus ten per cent for freight, handling, employees' wages, rent, etc.). Private commerce couldn't stand the blow. The grocers closed up shop.

Money from the National Lottery passed into the hands of another institution, the INAV, which devoted it to housing. Each family received the basic materials—a metal frame, a little corrugated iron, some cement. After that they had them built. Everyone applied himself. Sunday, the workers came from the city and lent a hand. The plan of each little house is agreed upon. It's explained to the farmers; they conform. But, in the private sector, the task is relatively simple. The solitary discomfort of a *bohio* is replaced by the comfortable solitude of the new dwelling. In the socialized sector, it isn't sufficient to construct lodgings, they have to be grouped.

Until the agrarian reform, the rural teams hadn't known that stable image of solidarity, a dwelling community. They worked four months on the seigneur's lands, and huddled anywhere to sleep. When spring came, with unemployment, they scattered. The workers left by all roads to rejoin their families in their hovels which were sometimes at the other end of the island.

At present, the co-operative must reside at the place of its work. The government, counseled by architects, established a model village—the most economical and—since the workers had to realize it themselves—the simplest.

All the co-operatives received or will receive a copy of the model village. They can adapt it to particular circumstances. On a single point the leaders gave proof of intransigence: the village must be self-contained. The private units will be disposed of around the school, the "store," and the other public buildings.

It was not a question of inciting the farmers to lead a community life. The Cubans will not stand for that. They are too attached to family intimacy.

But one simply wanted to have them see that their

village is not a mushroom bed, that this group of dwellings cannot be resolved to a sum of chance, of lucky neighbors. They live together because they work together. They must discover this truth each morning on opening the window, if they want to deepen their "revolutionary understanding."

In this month of March, 1960, nearly one year after the proclamation of the reform, much remains to be done, and yet, the essential is done. Whenever possible, the co-operatives started in on the task. Sometimes they advanced the date fixed by the government and put the village into a work-yard before having received the construction plan.

I saw them everywhere, buzzing like beehives, dreaming of sending national production up like an arrow, from day to day, from hour to hour, along the continual increase of their individual production. The workers discuss ceaselessly. The local leader is not first-rate. They enumerate his faults, they criticize him for not having utilized their particular competence, and, if they praise him, we can be sure that he has certainly merited it. Everyone wishes to invent, to organize, to rationalize.

But this joyous turbulence proves precisely everyone's profound agreement with the co-operative system. There is not one of their criticisms that doesn't suppose prior consent.

To rationalize, yes, to organize the tasks better in order to produce more, but without ever leaving the framework of socialized production. When I ask my Cuban friends the reason for such a harmony, they answer by enumerating the advantages of the reform—the lot of the co-operative workers is incomparably better than that of the small freeholder.

I was still speaking about it the day before yesterday. We were riding by auto toward Matanzas.

"Don't they sometimes want to divide up the land?"

My neighbor answered me, "Why would they? The taste for private property isn't inscribed in advance on the brain. To make private property tempting, it's necessary to have experienced it. These men, from father to son, have never possessed anything except that black sickle at their belts. They have had the heritage of

hunger, of poverty, of disease; that's all. They want to be delivered from these scourges. They want to have a roof over their heads, to work for themselves in working for all, to raise their standard of living incessantly, not having any other master except the nation, and integrating themselves into Cuban society. They have what they want, or they will have. These are tangible demands. Alongside this, the possession of soil—individual and even collective—for them is an abstraction.”

10 WHY NO ELECTIONS?

FOR the United States, the situation was clear. Castro took power without running for election. In the months that he has been ruling, he never sought the advice of the electoral body; he didn't even have the simple courtesy to indicate to the voters the date of the next call for elections, however distant it might be and free though he was to delay it even longer. In short, naked dictatorship.

American citizens are profoundly attached to their institutions. Free enterprise and parliamentary rule are, in their eyes, the two wombs of democracy. Either you have that, or it's fascism or communism, of course. For them, all aberrant regimes belong in the same boat. The press took advantage of the occasion. The story of Robin Hood was over. The public, frightened, discovered in his place a Hitler. Or Stalin. Take your choice.

Fidel disturbed them all the more because he had, from the first, restored the Constitution of 1940. “Why did he do that?” the continental newspapers asked. “Why, since he isn't applying it?”

In fact, this respectable text did provide for an elected parliament, responsible ministers. But there was no trace of a parliament, elected or not, in the new regime. There were ministers; perhaps they were even responsible, but no one knew to whom. The puritans of the North were

exasperated by this declaration of principle. They considered it hypocritical—what we in France call the homage vice renders to virtue. This Constitution was for show. It had been repeatedly violated by the despot who had formulated it. Another despot, chasing out the first, had fished it out of the stream and restored it to its glory, only to violate it in his turn.

The Yankees have a certain idea of democracy. According to them, economics is subordinate to politics—if not in practice, at least in theory. Here is what that gives: the President of the U.S.A. solicited the free ballots of the free individuals who freely gave him their votes. To keep them in his party, he will protect individual liberty, and, consequently, free property. Heir of a tyrant and a tyrant himself, Castro has no use for free votes, for an Assembly which would control his caprices. He scoffs at consent. He demands only obedience. At a stroke, the island becomes his estate—it passes into the ranks of private property. In short, parliamentary democracy creates, maintains, multiplies the private forms of the appropriation of production. Dictatorship leads to socialism, which is to say, according to these thinkers, to the concentration of the goods of all into the hands of one.

The misunderstanding stems from here. Castro and his friends have exactly the opposite idea. The Cubans are profoundly democratic; that will be clear to us shortly. But semicolonies, even recently liberated, don't have the noble idealism of their mother countries. In watching the onerous streaming of foreign neon flowing on their walls, in thinking about the ties which unite cane, poverty, slavery, and impotence, the young Cubans became accustomed, slowly but surely, to think that economics determines politics.

Let us understand clearly that they had no doctrine on this point. The doctrinaires were the puritans of the continent. The puritan generalizes—that's the pleasure of abstract men. The Cuban revolutionary never generalizes. His unique and singular problem is the island and what has to be done there. Tell him that in another land, in Europe, in Africa, the provisional emergency lies in the construction of a political regime more than

in the growth of production, and he will listen to you with interest, will no doubt believe you, and will conclude simply, "Here, it is just the opposite."

Or, he will even say nothing. He knows you understand him. And to understand, on the island, is to share the revolutionary certainties. Above all, this one: In Cuba, the directed economy has been imposed because the circumstances require it.

In New York, in Washington, the simple word "directed" (*dirigisme* in French), is enough to cause a scandal. It's for this reason that they have taken to the curious habit of labeling as *Communist* this government, which has no opinion on the regime of property.

If I argued this with some of my friends in America, I would begin by warning them: we won't breathe a word about principles. They are not involved. What has to be examined is the situation.

Underdevelopment must not be defined as a simple deficiency of the national economy. It is a complex relationship between a backward country and the great powers that have maintained it in this backward condition. The semicolony, delivered from its chains, again finds itself in its misery facing an irritated former mother country. They have to get out of their scarcity quickly or fall back into dependence. Nothing else will do. Even should the wave of a magic wand deliver the Great Power from its imperialist concepts, the freed colony would have to save itself by its own forces or put itself back into the hands of its former colonialist patron.

Simply, underdevelopment is a violent tension between two nations—the amount of tension is measured in the backwardness of the one in relation to the other.

An island, sleeping, shut off, dreams in 1960 that it is living in 1900. It wakes up to note that its neighbor's watch is going and that for his part, he is living as one ought to in 1960.

Sixty years behind, that's the whole story. And the sole Cuban problem is how to overcome this lag. For the moment, the lagger starts out with this handicap of a half century. His legs are shaky and he only notices the head platoon very far off in the dust. This, however, is

the unit he has to join. That means that this sad fellow has to run faster than the best.

The island must live a life of hell. If it fails to produce by itself a single one of the articles that it can manufacture, it would be necessary to have them come from New York or Chicago. That would be the beginning of a regression that could not be slowed. They would return to the large estates, to sugar, to slavery.

Thus, no matter what is done, Cuban production in this period immediately following its semicolonial status, cannot develop according to an economist's ideal model. Even presupposing good will everywhere, the speed and rhythm of future production—especially the increase in rate of growth—will be conditioned from the outset by Cuba's colonial past, her revolutionary present, and the policies of the other nations of the world.

"They ask us for ideas, a doctrine, forecasts," Guevara said to me. "But they forget that we are a rebound revolution."

He meant that the island is not playing the game. In its relations with the United States, the measures taken by its leaders are always ripostes; that's to be expected.

On one side is a little country of 6,600,000 inhabitants. On the other is a big one which is approaching 200 million. The national revenue of the big one is five times higher per citizen than in the little one.

In this forced economy, the United States represents constraint. Let's believe in Santa Claus and for the moment attribute to them perfect innocence. Even in this limited case, the manufacturers of Pittsburgh or Detroit, unless they stop their machines, objectively denounce the Cuban lag, and create in Cuba an emergency, that is to say, the almost measurable presence of a mortal danger.

It seems to me that one would not find a liberal in Europe who would not admit that the Cuban circumstances require a planned economy. The superindustrialization of the continent imposes it on this agricultural island. The revolutionary government submits to the pressure of reality; it deliberates each day under a menace, transforms the foreign menace into a requirement of the Cuban economy, makes known the effort that has

to be made, which sector is more or less immediately in danger. How could it be otherwise?

Does the island have the right to throw money into the sea, when the nascent industry eagerly demands capital? Would one allow industrialization to take place in any fashion, by chance, here and there, by a caprice in someone's head and pesos in his pocket? No. The country can no longer waste its strength.

Agriculture itself demands a modified planning. After the agrarian reform, it mattered little who possessed the land. What mattered, as diversified agriculture was created, was that the nation as a whole should decide what the landowner, individual or collective, should plant.

The nation, of course, is the Institute of Agrarian Reform that no one had elected or mandated. But when it was understood that the country was dying of indigestion from dollars and sugar, when it was known that it was necessary to prescribe other foods for it and to draw them out of its soil or let it die, then INRA was recognized as having, without mandate, a technical sovereignty which didn't even come from Castro, but from brute necessity. This organ did what it had to do.

There are, there will be, other institutes, all capped by the government. An over-all thought is needed to conceive the management of details for everything that one wants to create.

To obtain from the workers the greatest efficiency without imposing the harassment of extra work on them, there is only one way, in the provisional absence of modern machines: organization. With a single, ceaseless movement, the structures and relations of production will be recast. And who will do this recasting if it is not a planning group concentrating knowledge and power in its hands?

But the puritan of the U.S.A. condemns planned experiments everywhere, without exception or regard for extenuating circumstance. In their eyes, only tyrants can think of concentrating economic power in their hands and the reason is that they are already usurping all political power. Even the most liberal Americans will never admit that a centralized economy is compatible in the

slightest with the real exercise of democracy. It is a credo.

But the misunderstanding is still more radical. For a Yankee of good will would then say to the Cubans, "Very well! Prove to us that your government can exercise its planning in agreement with an elected Assembly." This means, at bottom, that planning is dictatorship. But they give you a chance: to temper the rigors of the executive by the wisdom of the legislative. No, that is the opposite, once again, of the Cuban practice. Assured that economics has primacy over everything, the Cuban leaders want to create popular liberty in the same places where the planning must be exercised. The people will never be free if they don't first realize their sovereign freedom in the shop or in the fields.

Captain Antonio Nuñez Jimenez, the director of INRA, told me, "Elections, why not? I'm not against them. I speak of them without heat because, for the moment, politics is dead. You know our problems, their urgency. Later," he said politely, "when it revives . . ."

I asked him, to see, "Why should it revive?"

He is a man of some refinement. Above his beard, which hides his chest, a smile creases his face. But he doesn't answer me. After an instant of silence:

"Why speak of democracy always under its political aspect? This aspect exists, and rest assured that I don't underestimate the importance of it. But it comes last. It is only a lure if all the manifestations of freedom are not summed up in the freedom to vote. I don't know how relations between employers and employees are in your country. But here, before February 1, 1959, I can tell you that they were not democratic. Today, the island is on the march and we have placed the people in charge of their rights. Each machete stroke, each riveting job makes us advance toward our first objective, toward democracy in work."

Several days later, I asked for the imposing collection of revolutionary laws. They were given to me and I consulted them. But I very quickly understood my error. I had taken it to be the repertory of the new Cuban institutions, and that was precisely what it couldn't be. These institutions, in effect, did not exist. Not that this

revolution was still too young to give itself fundamental laws. Others, six months after birth, defined themselves for eternity, even if, by a turn of fortune, they had to disappear at an early age.

No, the Cubans are in a hurry to have fields of tomatoes and steel factories. They are much less concerned to give themselves institutions. We will see what sort of laws the situation imposes on them. In any case, I can already say that they are acts, not words.

There remains the Constitution of 1940. Why adopt it, since it wasn't the time to apply it? The answer is simple.

In reviving it, the revolutionaries prolonged the unity of the Cubans. This was, as I have said, one of their principal objectives. But there already was, between them and the people, a complicity that American observers didn't know how to disclose. Not a Cuban was duped. Not one was impatiently waiting for the next electoral consultation. They were satisfied that the government rendered homage to this historical monument. But, paradoxically, to their profound respect for the Constitution they joined an equally profound scorn for the regime that it had engendered.

We can understand them, for in French history it has happened that we also have had bitter mouths and gall in our throats when we think of the elected assemblies (like those of 1849, for example).

In Cuba, parliamentary rule ran for a long time.

On only one occasion was Castro hissed. It was in Oriente. The war was won, but the revolution had not yet taken power. Fidel called a meeting and spoke. He was applauded. But when he spoke of the sovereignty of the people and enumerated the forms which would permit them to exercise this power, in particular, the regime of representative Assemblies, there was such an uproar that he judged it useless to insist.

In any case, it was necessary to return to reason. These people didn't like their former deputies. At the moment when they were being removed from humiliation, from impotence, they refused to be plunged back again by being delivered over to monkeys.

As for the young leaders, their aversion to parliamentary rule isn't founded on the past, on the unpleasant

experiences of their fathers, but on the future, on the seeds of menace within the representative system.

"What do they want?" one of them asked me. "That we vote? Nothing doing. Transmit our regrets and let's hope they don't go telling American nonsense in your country—that we're all dying of fear that a vote would put us in the minority. How dare you at one and the same time demand that the Cuban leaders carry out a referendum, and repeat, in all your books of political history, that a referendum, as a general rule, is only the consecration of the accomplished fact? We know our island, and we know that an electoral consultation—referendum or not—would give Castro 90 per cent of the votes. You are free not to believe it, but wait a little, go around with Fidel and you will be like us, you will know."

(He was right. Two days later I knew, or better yet, I saw.)

It was still too early. I told him simply, "Admit that your figures are true, don't you believe that they render the referendum necessary? It would be such a triumph, and it would nail shut so many hostile mouths that I don't understand why you deprive yourselves of it."

"For one single reason," he told me. "We don't want to pay for the triumph of the revolutionaries by wiping out the revolution. What is the meaning of our group? The unity of views, practical union. We are several in one. A single, same man everywhere at once. We explain this truth without respite. After it has chased out its *latifundistas*, an underdeveloped nation makes production the common denominator for all classes, their common interest. At present, what would an elected Assembly be? The mirror of our discords."

"You say that there are no more."

"Properly, for groups and people to disengage themselves from their narrow points of view, tension of work is needed, a temperature of fusion. Fortunately, everything is being done with heat. But if you stop everything to give them an electoral law, people will be divided anew because elections are made to divide them. The proof is that the law will be called equitable if groups and interests are represented in the Assembly in propor-

tion to their national importance. Besides, the elector has to choose. Thus, there are at least two parties. That means a reserve team, which isn't yet very grave, but it also means especially a reserve economy. Two economies, why not? But elsewhere, not on our island and not today."

And he questioned me directly. "What would you do if you were asked to arrange to hold elections in Cuba?

"The elector can always be found; it isn't he who disturbs us. But the eligible ones? We will establish on paper the plurality of parties—all very well and good. But the real parties, where to find them? Do you think they'll spring up by themselves? We doubt it. Rather look at the haste they made in disappearing. Several dry trees will reflourish: the Orthodox Party* has kept a nominal existence, a headquarters; several forty-year-olds would reclaim it. But are you charged with finding a program for it? This bourgeois group of the moderate left would not have the brass to place itself to the left of the revolutionaries; nor the naïveté to place themselves to the right. The revolution is irreversible. Does anyone think that the people would give its votes to a candidate who would propose to renege on the agrarian reform and return to zero?

"The truth is, no position is possible today in the semicircle. The revolution, in the unity of its practical action, is necessarily its own right and its own left. It is in the revolution that resistance and rebel fighters are found, joined together. Every new party would have to accept from the outset the framework of revolutionary activity, its fundamental objective and its means. It could do nothing without taking as its own program the actual aim of the whole island: the augmentation of production.

"Where then would the divergences be? In any case, the emergency is the same for each—to go fast. Everywhere, we will see it. The people are learning to demand. Everyone has an interest in pushing the movement. Does one imagine a candidate distinguishing himself from the revolutionary group by proclaiming before the electorate that he will march more slowly than the present

* It is now dissolved.

leadership? The sole way of separating himself without getting lost would be to move faster.

"But these kids in power are fast, and then they have 17 months of experience. Let one only try to catch up to them. One wouldn't even try. If we proceeded tomorrow to hold an election, even if several parties intrigued to get the votes of Cubans, the choice would be too easy. On one side, a roving group, efficacious, illustrious, that could make an issue of its glory, of its efforts and their results. On the other side, organizations hardly out of their swaddling clothes, without any experience in power, who would have nothing to give other than abstract promises."

11 THE KIDS TAKE OVER

THE greatest scandal of the Cuban revolution isn't that it expropriated the plantations, but that it brought children to power. For years the grandfathers, the fathers, and the elder brothers waited to take over when the dictator chose to die. Promotion would come by seniority.

Providing for the far-off day when the ruling group would be changed, the parties from time to time took the risk of publicly proclaiming their attachment to parliamentary rule. Everything was going well when, one fine day, the kid brothers grabbed power and made it understood that they would keep it.

No old people in power! In fact, I didn't see a single one among the leaders. Touring the island, I met my sons, if I dare say so, in all the positions of authority from one end of the scale to the other. Or in any case, the sons of my contemporaries. The fathers don't make themselves noticed. This island has the most discreet 50-year-olds.

Thin and blond, beardless, the Minister of Communications is certainly not the Benjamin of the revolution.

He is 29 years old. In this group, that's middle-aged. But he has that serious gaiety of adolescents. That suffices for his young colleagues to amuse themselves kidding him about his youth, which is tantamount to being astonished with theirs.

Armando Hart, Minister of Education, is 27. Guevara and Raúl Castro are barely past 30. When they are not talking about public affairs, they are young people among themselves. They quibble with one another. One notices about them that they are beginning their old age early; in my opinion, much too early.

I have heard some of them explain Urrutia's opinionatedness by his heavy weight of years, though he wasn't in his sixties. They grant, however, that the Presidency of the Republic requires, in the chief executive, a certain age, an exterior sign of deliberation. They are consequently delighted that the new president, Mr. Dorticós, is, as one of them said to me, "at least 40." For my part, when I am among them I feel older than I do in Paris, and, in spite of their extreme politeness, I am afraid both of troubling them and of betraying my contemporaries.

Since a revolution was needed, circumstances willed that youth should accomplish it. Only the young had enough anger and anguish to attempt it, enough integrity to succeed.

On this island, demographic pressure destroyed the equilibrium and put the older people in the minority. But the old had had jobs for years. They held on to them tightly. Scarcely had they raised their heads and looked at Cuban society than the newcomers saw all avenues blocked, the last jobs grabbed by their older brothers. Afterward, the doors were shut; no advancement possible.

On one side of the wall, there was the immutable pyramid of the secure; on the other, the mob of jobless, which increased every year and whose front ranks suffered from the ever-accentuated, gradually approaching pressure of the latest to join their number. No future, unless it was the degradation of the subsistence level. The new unemployed discovered that unemployment was not the effect of an accident, but quite simply their destiny. These masses of youth brusquely rejected the system

which refused them life. The adults had the luck—perhaps today it was the bad luck—of being provided for. For them, there was something left to lose; no matter how modest it might be, a regular salary leads to resignation.

The young people had nothing to lose. They saw their elders treating tyranny with respect and thought, "It's our misfortune to which they're resigned." In fighting privilege, these children were by the same token revolting against the grown-ups. Faced with the resignation of the adults, they forged an intransigence that they never lost and which permitted them to understand the appeal launched by the intransigence of Castro. It was all the same for these *enfants terribles* to rebel against a dictatorial regime as against the bankruptcy of those who had permitted it or supported it by their passivity. It was all the same to pulverize the mercenary army or bring their elders to abdication. In this curious adventure, the cities were liberated by the countryside and the fathers by the sons.

Soldiers, when they return from war, have a fraternity from which civilians are excluded. Here the exclusion was even more radical. The young underground soldiers sometimes revealed their plans to their younger brothers and sisters. But they took a malicious pleasure in keeping the secrets of the resistance movement from the older generation. A question of security, certainly; but just the same, how come the adults weren't reliable? The boys of the family ran around all over the region under false names, supplied with false papers. In the family home, their younger brothers and sisters stood watch, ready to lie, to warn them if that were possible, and the imposing masters of the house were ignorant of everything.

In one provincial city, several days after the victory, a doctor needed some gas. He asked for some, was sent to the revolutionary authorities, and appeared at their headquarters. The local chief was making a tour of inspection. The gas depended on him; it would be necessary to wait. The doctor waited. Like everyone else, he knew the young leader by his underground name and by his attainments. According to public reports, the young

man had done so much that the rebels, from the moment they had taken it, had turned the city over to him with the mission of wiping out the disorders of war as rapidly as possible. Our petitioner was soon disconcerted by the coming and going of young people—the close collaborators of the leader—whom he thought he recognized as among those he'd seen coming out of high school and college, but who insisted on calling themselves by their pseudonyms and on referring to their chief only by his surname. A little later, however, the doctor had the consolation of discovering that he knew the leader under some other circumstances: it was his son.

This peaceable and thoughtful young man was married early. He had a son. As is the rule, the young couple lived with the husband's parents. Could one dream of a more united family?

The civil war was raging, but this tranquil son slept at home every night. That meant that he stayed out all night several times a week, and that his wife protected the secret of his absences. The doctor understood, with mixed feelings, that he had a glorious but very discreet offspring. Deceived by the tranquil presence of a child-bride, of a newborn baby, this father had lived in ignorance. They had maintained him so to use him for alibis. Worse yet, his daughter-in-law knew everything. They had more confidence in such frail forces than in those of a full-grown man. The affair ended cheerfully. The revolution had won; thus, the son had acted for the best. I don't know if the doctor examined his past seriously, if he sought out the motives for a reserve which, everything considered, condemned him. Had he been a confidant of his son, he would not have betrayed him, certainly, even under torture. But would he have *encouraged* him?

It was a young bourgeois revolutionary who, it seemed to me, best summed up youth's point of view.

"I respected, I still respect my father and my older brothers. They are good people. When I was a child, they served as an example for me. I would have wanted to imitate them all my life. But then they disappointed me. It isn't their fault, and it's not mine."

There are, I imagine, a hundred other ways of de-

scribing the style of men and the functioning of offices. For my part, I begin with this and I will stick to it. If a central thread is needed—and one is needed—youth is the most immediate, the most undeniable evidence. It is everywhere. It runs in the streets. In the evening, facing the sea, it drills in Havana. And then, here, without ceasing to be an age of life, it has become an internal quality of the leaders. In declaring itself revolutionary, youth became a social by-law. Work relations, class conflicts, everything doubled with the fundamental relationship, that of the young people who are suffering their world, with the grown-ups who made it for them. Today, in the work-yards, in the fields, in a ministry, *the work is young*. Truly young. And command goes in the direction of the hands of a watch. To command, better not to have lived too long. To obey, it is sufficient to be no more than 30. That signifies that the regime produces and manifests a radical overthrow of human relations. If we wish to understand these modified relationships, we have to seek in all domains the consequences of that historic event, the invasion of Cuba by the barbarians.

A new barbarism fell on the very civilized, slightly weakened population of the island—youth, which advanced in disguise. The natives are well treated by their new conquerors, but the latter keep their distance and marry among themselves—no fraternization.

Many revolutions can complain, like people, "I never had any youth!" They were pushed too much, poor things, and too soon. By necessity. There were classes to skip, examinations to pass. Childhood diseases consumed them. Up to now, Cuba has this fortune: it hasn't had to cut short its beginnings. Fortunately—it couldn't have done so without destroying itself. From 1957 to 1959 the revolution of youth prepared a new adventure that they have been living for 14 months: the youth of a revolution.

Let us ask ourselves what it means for a young power to be ruled by youths. I will examine only three essential questions: how the new enterprise fashions these adolescents to make of them the executives who must lead it properly; how they maintain in the constructive revolution its negative character of rebellion; how they carry

out in practice the sentence passed against the adults by demographic pressure. In other words, what will power do to them? What will they do with power? In this island which is rejuvenated every day, have they effected the reversal of a mandatory alliance and founded their practical democracy on the newest of human relations?

When they took power, it was their youth which made them examine their deficiencies and which permitted them to put up with these failings. They needed professionals in every post, technicians, experts, specialists. Where could they be found? There was a dearth of trained cadres. In any event, if it still existed, this elite would have to be sought among the world of suspects, of adults. Qualified practitioners are always glad to wait and see. They were keeping themselves in reserve, between the light and the shadows, and furtively feeling the pulse of the revolution. Now, the morning after the great uproar, when everything is on the ground and it is necessary to erase the traces of war, when a counter-offensive of the enemy is not completely excluded, confidence is the primordial bond.

"Castro," Guevara said to me one day while showing me his own head, "could have rarely found a head that was fuller. Perhaps he could have found one better made. He knows he won't find one that agrees better with his own, down to the minutest thought."

The authorized practitioners were left to their uncertainty. Their services were dispensed with. Confidence distributed the offices. In the ministries and in the institutes, at the head of the most technical services, a government of rebels and resistance fighters installed resistance fighters and rebels. Now, neither the former nor the latter, thrown into the scuffle at age 20, had had the time to become particularly enlightened on one sector of the island, to acquire a competence and a mastery of the subject. As I have said, they all complained about Cuban education—verbiage without truth. Those who had pursued their studies and who sought an early specialization in college had been still more categorically refused culture by Batista. During the later years, he

took the slightest trouble as a pretext to close the University sine die. (Footnote by *France-Soir*: The last of the closings lasted from November 26, 1956 to the month of April, 1959.)

Nothing nor no one, in truth, could help the young leaders—neither the adults, nor the traditions (the ties of the island with its folklore, with its will for independence, were cut clean by the Yankee scissors around 1900), nor the great men of other times.

Their example could not be useful to Castro; the situations remained too different. In common they had only courage and their inflexible will to conquer independence for their country. Here they are, then, these conquerors, reduced to counting only on themselves, with visible objectives but no route traced out to attain them. What are these young, scrupulous people going to do? What anyone would do in their place—they understand that they are entering the phase of the one-man band. When an underdeveloped country has attempted the great effort of tearing itself from misery, the nascent movement must either turn short, with the dead and the pain wasted, or the leaders, while waiting to form trained cadres, must assume all offices, give themselves competence in all matters, and not fear to change themselves into universal men.

"They made me Minister of Communications," said Oltulsky, a very active member of M-26-7. "I don't know why. Perhaps it was because I was in charge of destroying them."

And Guevara, director of the National Bank, while offering me excellent coffee in his office, said, "I am first of all a doctor, then somewhat of a soldier, and finally, as you see, a banker."

He isn't the only one of his kind in Cuba. The revolution gladly recruited its one-man bands among the doctors or surgeons. The Institute of Agrarian Reform divided the island into economic zones. To administer each of these from top to bottom of the scale, agronomists were needed. They took doctors, sometimes veterinarians. They asked what had to be done. They were told, "You will see clearly."

There were quite a few defeats, especially in the first

months, but everything considered, the medical corps extricated itself better than honorably from this supplementary task.

"It's because they have a feeling for organisms," someone said to me. "They take a zone, an economic region, for a living body, and know that everything depends on everything else."

But for me, the flattering success of these doctor-agronomists comes above all from a particular characteristic of their knowledge. These practitioners have learned, since medical school, to join practice indissolubly with science. They brought their habits to their new activity. In a solution that they improvise they see at a glance the application of a rigorous law that they will try to establish. In the body of known laws that govern an economy, they will instantly see those that must be retained *today* because an application can be made of them.

The medical school isn't the only one to rule. There are volunteers in all the professions as well as among young people who never had a vocation. In other words, the one-man band is always a usurper. He occupies a post that normally would go to another. His only excuse is that this other doesn't exist. No one is completely qualified in Cuba to do what he is doing. But they are not concerned. Qualification will come with success, disqualification with failure.

While waiting for the revolution to separate the wheat from the chaff, to such an extent did it ban the unlucky or the evil-minded from the private professions that no one in Cuba is an incumbent in his post. To name someone to a public position means to try him there, not more. He enjoys a new reprieve with each new success. But he is not assured against the morrow, against the next hour. Usurper, perhaps, but provisional. The entire island is unacquainted with what is called elsewhere acquired rights.

These young people, penetrated with their knowledge of inexperience, fear future error and the condemnation which would follow. They don't have even an idea that they could defend themselves by invoking past achievements. That would be lacking in pride.

One exception—Captain Antonio Nuñez Jimenez. He was qualified in advance to direct the INRA. A geographer, he published, during the time of Batista, the only valid study on Cuba. Did he come to geography by revolt, or to the revolt through geography?

The fact is that this book denounced the evils and indicated the remedies with an objectivity which displeased the regime. They had it seized. It has just reappeared, still current. But here is what I want to bring out: the most trustworthy knowledge, a competence recognized everywhere—even abroad—gave to this revolutionary only an apparent qualification. All that was said, written, done before the first day of the Year (1959) will remain a dead letter. That's the past. Jimenez the geographer is no more qualified than Jimenez the rebel to become Jimenez the reformer. What renders him worthy and capable of directing the INRA is the difficult effort he had to make, that he is still making, to change himself while changing the country.

During the insurrection he could without difficulty be a man of science and a soldier. These two occupations make neither war nor peace; they are unaware of each other's capabilities. After the victory, everything began. One doesn't do one's part at the national demand. In peace time it is impossible to be with all one's heart a geographer and a revolutionary. Jimenez put geography at the service of the revolution. It was necessary to adapt scientific knowledge to the detail of practical necessities, to make a practitioner of the scientist without failing, for this reason, to control action by science. His knowledge of places, of terrain, of climate, lost all autonomy. It was summed up each day, legible to him alone, in his bookkeeping calculations: to install in this coalshed a co-operative of ten, fifteen families; to decide on what seeds to sow in that other place; to give still another the go-ahead on reforestation work. Becoming a man of action, to the extent that one is a scientist, is hard. One doesn't succeed at it without breaking a few bones.

At the moment that white collar men were learning to put theory into action, others, formed by action, had to enlighten it with theory. Both suffered enormously from

the gaps in their respective backgrounds, never so much as during the first months of 1959. Before the urgency of the tasks, they felt their deficiencies to the point of bewilderment. Some said, "Dare I decide?" And others, "Will I understand what I decide?"

Of the two apprenticeships, the second could appear the most depressing. Two years of jungle, and then they had to go back to the classroom. At 40 years, age would have consolidated their ignorance and rusted their faculties. Adults lose their way when one tries to teach them. We fear being unable to receive or being unable to retain. When the one-man band is too old, the revolution grinds; it is stiff; it rubs; everything gets on one's nerves. In the underdeveloped countries that are trying to get out of trouble, the scarcity of trained cadres exercises a double pressure on the leaders. Produce, that is the extreme emergency. One gives battle: that of the tomato, that of rice; later, that of iron. To take an hour to study agronomy, work on metals, is to steal it and lose it.

One loses it just as well if one gets involved in seeing no further than one's nose, if one works in a fog. That is less obvious. One no longer steals, it is leakage. But the costs are the same in the end. If it is necessary to begin the work over again, one pays still more dearly. How can one produce, increase production *without knowledge*? One mustn't confuse revolution, which takes its calculated risks and which founds its inventions on experience, with adventure, which is only the most amusing game of chance.

In brief, this double contradictory requirement defines the time of revolutionaries: not a minute for theory, not an action which isn't founded on experience. The one-man band knows at the outset that he knows nothing. He must learn everything, thus learn all the time. But he has everything to do, thus he must act all the time.

12 "CHE" GUEVARA

IN Cuba, the leaders were saved by their age. Their youth permits them to approach the revolutionary fact in its austere harshness. If he must learn, if he must be enlightened by theoretical knowledge, the official speaks to no one about it. He makes it his business. No one will know in what sector—in general it is his private life—he would have gathered several abandoned twigs of time. No one will know that he indefinitely increases the intensity of his effort in order to indefinitely reduce the duration of the apprenticeship.

But we can guess what they didn't tell us. Guevara, to cite only him, passes for a man of great culture. And that is evident. It doesn't take long to understand that behind each sentence there are deposits of gold. But this large learning, the general knowledge of a young doctor who is dedicated by inclination, by passion, to the study of the social sciences, is separated by an abyss from the precise technical knowledge which is indispensable to a state banker.

He never speaks of that, other than to joke about his change of profession. But one senses the intensity of the effort. It is betrayed everywhere except on this calm and reposed face. First of all, the hour of our meeting is unusual: midnight.

At that, I was lucky. Journalists and foreign visitors are very willingly and lengthily received—at two or three o'clock in the morning. To get to his office, we crossed a large room, no furniture except several chairs, some benches along the walls. In a corner, a table with the telephone. On all the seats were soldiers crushed with fatigue, some on guard, some sleeping, tormented by the discomfort of their position.

Behind the telephone table, I saw curled up, a young rebel officer, his long black hair spread on his shoulders,

his cap on his nose, his eyes closed. He snored very lightly, and his rounded lips tightly gripped the end of a large cigar, barely started. The last act of the sleeper had been to light it, against the temptations of sleep.

In crossing this brightly lit office, however, I had the feeling of taking a train before dawn and entering a sleeping compartment. I recognized the half-opened pink eyes, the piled up or twisted bodies, tossed about, the nocturnal uneasiness. I wasn't sleepy yet, but I felt through them the heaviness of bad nights.

A door opened and we entered. The impression disappeared. A rebel officer wearing a cap, his complexion dull, waited for me. He wore a beard for a collar and long hair like the soldiers in the vestibule, but his smooth, cheerful face, close-shaven, seemed matinal to me. It was Guevara.

Was he coming out of the shower? Why not? The fact is that he had started work the evening before, very early, that he had lunched, dined in his office, received visitors, and that he expected to receive others after me. I heard the door close behind my back and I lost both the memory of my old fatigue and any notion of the hour. Night doesn't enter this office. Among these fully awake men, at the height of their powers, sleeping doesn't seem like a natural need, just a routine of which they had more or less freed themselves.

I don't know when Guevara rests or when his comrades rest. It varies, I suppose. The work load determines. If it drops, they stop. But in any case, since they are looking for fallow hours in their lives, it is normal that they should tear them away first from the latifundias of sleep.

Imagine a vast project, partly finished, which has been carried on for the last 14 months by a single group. Here is the ideal of these young people and it is nearly attained. In 1960 the lights burn all night in Cuba. They still speak of nights and days, but it is out of habit.

Nevertheless, despite their courtesy, they couldn't prevent reducing to the strict minimum the imbecilic hours that I devoted to sleep. Going to bed very late, I was awakened very early. I hardly suffered from it. On the contrary, I was often irritated, no matter how late the

hour, at going to sleep when they were still up. No matter how early I awoke, I knew that they had preceded me by several hours. It is impossible to live on this island without participating in its unanimous tension.

These young people form a discreet cult of energy, so much loved by Stendhal. But don't think that they talk about it, that they theorize about it. They live energy, they exercise it, they invent it, perhaps. They prove it with its effects, but they don't breathe a word about it. Their energy manifests itself.

Night and day, to maintain in his office and on his face the clean, correct cheerfulness of morning, Guevara needs energy. Everyone needs it to work, but still more to wipe out, to the extent that they come, the marks of work and the blemishes of sleep. They are perfectly willing to talk of their nervousness, but they don't intend to let it show. They push their self-control to the point of appearing, or rather of being relaxed. Things go so far that they use this energy, now become their second nature, to tyrannize their natural ways.

They do the necessary, all the necessary, more than the necessary, and even the superfluous. As I said, they have curtailed their sleep. They have to. Besides, they would not stand for it if aggression, should there ever be any, surprised them in their beds. Who will not understand them? Who will not understand the anguish and anger over plots and sabotage that keep them awake night after night?

But they go much further. They almost repeat the words of Pascal, "We must sleep no more." Never. One would say that sleep has left them, that it, too, has emigrated to Miami. I know only their need to stay awake. For it is a need. In any case, a passion. They stay up without motive. Or rather, they feel the imperious obligation to finish a task, dawn or no.

It is done; day breaks. The finished work has its joys which go so well with dawn. They refuse to go back to their rooms, to lower the blinds and to recreate the shadows that the sun is chasing, to shroud the morning, their lucidity, for several disposable hours, in the degradation of a false night.

They go to watch the day, the palm trees in the

court, or the sea; they are happy. They return to their offices, leafing through another dossier, less urgent, sitting down to read one of the documents. Their first visitor finds them at 8 or 9 o'clock, fresh, smiling, shaved, but with eyes already dimmed by the far-off look of new expectations.

There is no affectation in this—quite the contrary. They are thoughtful, they question themselves—surely, they are going to use themselves up too quickly. And, at the time of the counsels of ministers, committee meetings, or other common discussions, there are always a group of leaders, never the same ones, who decide to lecture the others and to talk sense. In the end, truth cries out: too much, too much. He who wants to travel far must spare his mount. In brief, it is time to lie down.

These counsels of wise words provoke enthusiasm from the others. It is unanimously decided to follow the advice instantly. The meeting ends, everyone embraces. Good night! Each one gets into the auto that is waiting for him, wakes up the driver, and, once past the corner of the building, gives the address of the Ministry, the Institute, etc.

He simply wants to leave an order on the table where it will be found tomorrow. The next day one finds this order; one finds many others under the writing pad. One also finds the Minister or the director, full of life, tracing the plan of a new installation.

Franqui, director of *Revolucion*, is another affair. He is scarcely older than the average revolutionary, but he lived flexibly, according to his disposition, before the revolution gave a turn of the screw to this life.

At present his life is hard and full and without respite. But when he threw himself into the resistance, when he was put in charge of the underground press, when he chose the secret struggle, passion, civil war, he felt that violence tore him from his natural rhythm and that it would communicate unto death an almost insupportable rhythm, a growing tension.

From time to time he feels his fatigue. He is disturbed about it. Above all, his nerves mustn't give way. This tanned man who wears a mustache, turned his large

eyes toward us—even when he smiled these eyes were often serious—and let us know that he hadn't slept in 32 hours and that he is retiring.

No intonation—a calm, undisguised voice. He is too proud and too discreet to pester us with his physical state or his cares. Nevertheless, we understood—he is really very worn out. If he wishes, we will drive him back. Oh, no, he asks simply that we drop him in front of the newspaper office; he has some matters to arrange there. In an hour he will be in his bed.

We drop him off. It is quite late. Other journalist friends accompany us to the restaurant he had chosen for us. We were dining there an hour later when he reappeared. He is wearing his fatigue on his face, but he smiles at us. There is work at the paper: the Eisenhower trip to Latin America, these imbecilic accusations in a United States daily which he has to pulverize—in short, he will spend the night. He is going to eat a bite with us before getting back into harness. He leaves us a little later and we find him again the next morning, shaven, completely fresh.

On the subject of nourishment, they are less strict. When food is present, when they think of it, and when they have nothing else to do, they eat. That certainly doesn't mean that they take two meals—even frugal ones—a day. But it isn't forbidden to feed oneself. When they invited me to dine, they ate well. Without drinking, except, out of politeness, a Daiquiri, a Cuban specialty, because we liked this light taste of rum in lemon-flavored melting snow.

They have the sobriety of Latins. The foreigner came to get drunk at the Vedado between the walls of their hotel. But even under Batista, the Cubans were loath to drink.

The truth is that they wanted to rediscover those moments during the war when the scarcity of food gave to the brief encounter of a rebel with a hot plate the loving violence of a stroke of lightning. Suddenly to give in to hunger is the rebel ideal. But they have all excluded the routine alternation of lunch and dinner from their daily program. To the point that these young people, who showed the warmest and most ingenious solici-

tude for their foreign guests, on certain days during our tours across the island, forgot our stomachs because they didn't remember their own.

One day, awakened early in the morning, we left Santa Clara by car, climbed back toward a little fishing port, took a sailboat with a dozen of our friends, then, after several hours, we all landed on a desert island. It was hardly less deserted when we set foot on it. Contained on a narrow band of earth and sand by a vegetation which swallowed up everything, we were pierced through by the sun. We exchanged words at a slackened pace.

Evening was falling when we re-embarked, better instructed on the misfortunes of Robinson Crusoe than we had ever been. Someone then noticed that we had been given nothing to eat. Several hours of fasting is not serious. To tell the truth, I noticed nothing. My companions communicate their energy. In forgetting the rights of their stomachs so completely, they rendered me the service of having me suppress the rights of mine. But I will remain in a stupor in stating that these young men and their young wives had in fact neglected nothing. We found sandwiches on the boat. They had made them at Santa Clara, transported them with us over land and sea, to the desert island, and then, at the last minute, they were left in the hold. Why? one will ask. From the little that one knows the Cubans of today, even on the surface, one is tempted to reply, why had they taken the sandwiches in the first place?

Of all these night watchmen, Castro is the most wide-awake. Of all these fasting people, Castro can eat the most and fast the longest.

I will speak of his madness, the good fortune of Cuba. But in any event, the rebels are unanimous. They cannot be qualified to demand an effort of the people unless they exercise a veritable dictatorship over their own needs. In working 24 hours—and more—without stopping, in turning night into day, in showing themselves capable of forgetting hunger, they roll back the limits of the possible for their leaders. This provisional triumph, this image, shown everywhere, of the revolution continually in action, encourages the workers of the is-

land to liquidate fatalism and every day to conquer the old mocking hell of impossibility.

In reality, the leaders are doing the impossible. They do it every day and know that they won't do it for long. Vanquished, impossibility is avenging itself on the victor by shortening his life. But do they have such a great desire to die old? A rebel who retires, that prospect hardly pleases them. Revolt is not an honorary award.

And here it is nearly four years ago that they made a radical choice. One could kill them, but not bring them to submission. Thus, their new life was born of this accepted death. It was an initiation, the baptism of fire. Today, Batista is overthrown, the other adversaries of Cuba are hesitating. It is too late or too soon to fight. But the presence of death is in them. Their existence is already given over. It has not yet been taken, but they continue to make the offer. Frenzy in work is wear and tear. Their lives are burning. They will be quickly consumed for a work which will remain a long time.

How long will it take? Five years? Ten years? They don't know a thing. The island will decide. They won't leave as long as the welding hasn't been done, as long as they haven't wiped out illiteracy and formed trained cadres for new industries.

Afterward, what will they have to do? The varied, always incomplete knowledge of the one-man band could only, in the second period, annoy the technicians and scientists that they themselves would have formed. In short, the young leaders have their objective: to fulfill the current phase of the revolution, to lead it to the edge of the following moment, and to transcend it in eliminating themselves.

They know their strength. The decade which begins in the Year I they know is theirs. In the Year X, everything will be even better. They would accept not living a single day in 1970 if it were promised to them that they wouldn't lose an hour of 1960.

It is the same high demand that is found again in the rigorous conduct of their morals. From childhood, they detested the faked graces, the accommodations that the capital sold to the foreigners, and still more, the doubtful pleasures which diverted the Cubans—rich and poor

—from their misfortune. When they saw the tourists treat the island as a good-time girl, not proud but compliant, they were ashamed, and shame, as Marx has noted, is a revolutionary sentiment. That sufficed to outline the shape of their morality. It would make them do the contrary of what was done up till then.

I saw the house of Franqui, director of the newspaper with the largest circulation (*Revolucion*). I saw on the other side of the same road, that of Oltulsky, Minister of Communications. Two cottages at the edge of the water, pleasant, but economical, in the midst of other cottages inhabited by middle-class people.

In other sections facing the sea, de luxe villas exist in Havana. Some of them have been confiscated. Among others there is a real palace that a rich functionary of Batista built for his mistress. But it was neither Jimenez who lived in it, nor Guevara, nor even Castro. They had given it to the writers and to the intellectuals to use to receive foreigners, while waiting for it to become the headquarters of their union.

The ministries have their autos, but not the ministers. The proprietary state appropriates automobiles for the offices; it ignores persons. Still, neither the one nor the other likes to consume gas uselessly, to wear out the brakes and tires without a precise motive. Cuba doesn't manufacture automobiles nor will it do so for a long time. And the situation of the country does not permit it—except in emergency—to import them. The official feels, even if it isn't perceptible, under his feet, in his back, in the noise of the motor, the irreversible and slow transformation of the car into scrap iron. Oltulsky, when he can, prefers to go about on foot.

They hold themselves accountable to the nation for all of their time. But they refuse to waste money. When they go abroad, they take a plane to save national time, but they take care to travel tourist class to save public currency.

For the rest, this modesty becomes their age. What would they do in the de luxe class? Cubana Airlines sometimes carries, among the women and children and sleeping men, a thin young man sitting upright on his seat keeping his eyes open. Formerly, this would have

been a fortune hunter. Today it is a leader traveling.

Recently, somewhere over Europe, an old soul was frightened. He realized his age and that an epoch was ending. A very honest diplomat, he had accommodated himself to all the regimes, except the dictatorship of Batista. Ambassadors are old people. The new regime had reintegrated His Excellency. His Excellency was going to take up his new post.

The diplomat, at the end of a stopover, found himself next to a young man, badly enough clothed, who held in his hand an embarkment card. They smiled at each other. They climbed into the apparatus. The young man eclipsed himself before the old man, who took his seat in the de luxe class as do all dignitaries. Abroad, the honor of a nation is measured by the honors accorded to its ambassadors.

He turned toward his companion and said, "There is a seat alongside me."

The young man made a gesture of excusing himself. "I am traveling in tourist class." He returned to his seat among the emigrants of the sky. At the following stopover, the ambassador was nowhere to be found.

"I was his Minister," said the young man. "He was ashamed of me."

In telling me this story, my Cuban friend certainly didn't want to make fun of the diplomat. He found it legitimate, he also, not to be niggardly when one represents the Cuban nation abroad. Everything for the ambassador: a vigorous old age, a de luxe seat. On his arrival, orchids, if that could be arranged. But the Minister is not a representative. He takes himself for a worker of the new regime, one of the 100,000 workers who give to the ambassadors a Cuban nation to represent.

13 "PATRIA Ó MUERTE!"

WHEN an insurrection breaks out, everywhere in the world the government in power gives the name of *rebels* to the insurgents. That means that they are raising themselves up in the name of vile appetites against the most legitimate authority and that they will have either to submit or die.

If it happens that the insurrection triumphs, the government flees or is piled into the prisons, the leaders of the victors take power and exercise it. They will call themselves liberators, revolutionaries, what have you, to make it understood to the people that they have abolished the old disorder and that they are going to build a new order. The word "rebellion" disappears for some time from the vocabulary. It will reappear to designate the next insurrection. All that goes without saying and the adjustment of words to the situation operates automatically.

Except in Cuba. One read the word "rebels" in the newspapers of the dictatorship; one reads it now in the revolutionary press. In both cases it was a question of the same men—of Castro and the guerrillas of the Sierras.

One day, in an auto, I was talking with the driver, a very young soldier, and I committed the error of questioning him about the "soldiers." He had answered lively and gayly to all the other questions; this one embarrassed him. He looked at me with a little mistrust as if I had spoken to him in an unknown language. He ended by glancing at Franqui, his neighbor, to call him to help.

"He means, 'rebel soldier,'" said Franqui.

It needed nothing more to return the young man to his confidence and his good spirits. Franqui added, turning toward me, "Here the word 'soldier' no longer means anything. Alone, it remains indeterminate. Or else it

means: Batista's mercenary. In the same way, 'the army,' without any other qualification, means the military institution of the former regime. If you speak of ours, you must say 'rebel army.' For the men who make it up, 'rebel' suffices—or, if you pronounce it as one word, in a single stroke, in a single breath—'rebelsoldier.' ”

The whole population has taken over this vocabulary. This requires, in a way, that the pioneers of the regime remain outlaws. Why? First for a fundamental and practical reason: Castro's troops were forged in a civil war, that is to say, in a war that civilians waged against the military. Their declared aim was not only to defeat, but to destroy the regular army—which they did.

Suddenly these civilians, victors over the mercenaries, were transformed by their victory into soldiers. We know that people's armies, when they have won, are faced with an alternative: either to transform themselves into a military institution, or be liquidated. But, by a misfortune which is the rule, at the moment of choosing, the new regime discovers its most powerful enemy is outside the country. It would be insane to throw away their arms when the country is threatened with invasion. The popular army remains, but without decree; it is a semiofficial apparatus that is maintained only by the exigencies of national defense.

In Cuba, no one would admit this shameful tolerance of the military apparatus. This apparatus is set up to attain a singular objective, perfectly defined by Castro: to systematically destroy the regular army. And to disappear right afterward.

Since soldiers, from wherever they come, have no function other than to keep the people in slavery, the island will nevermore support soldiers. And, in fact, Castro's companions have as their principal task the advancement of the moment when this civilian army, militarized against the military army to beat it, can proceed to its own liquidation.

Under their impulse, the whole people is organized into militia. There wasn't one of them in October. Today, peasants and city people are learning to handle arms.

There are 100,000 militiamen and women.* There were only three or four thousand fighters in the civil war.

When the population is the entire armed force, the rebel army will have lived out its days. Only several technical services will remain to organize a people's war, if need be. While the people are armed for war, Castro's soldiers are learning peaceful work. The exchange which took place with zeal, in the struggle against Batista, is pursued systematically. The troops withdraw from the cities, disperse into small units which clear away underbrush alongside the peasants.

In short, this army is destroying itself and installing itself. It is installed in destroying itself, it destroys itself in installing itself. It is a matter of an irreversible and complex process. The nation produced a defensive apparatus which it reintegrates and dissolves within itself. Specially created against the military institution, this organ must declare what it is—an anti-army.

All that must show up in the signs, in the insignia. That is why the heroes of this war are called "rebels." That is why they wear beards and long hair. [The long hair was cut in July, 1960.]

It is also why the highest grade is that of the commandante (equivalent to major). It is why a Negro—previously there was racial discrimination—is at the head of the anti-army (this Negro is a commander in chief because he is the most capable; but before 1957 he didn't have the slightest chance of demonstrating his capacities).

The beards are the consequence of a vow—no shaving before the end of the war. As for me, I certainly would want to. But in any case, the war is over and the beards are still intact. And then, if it was an oath, it was easy for them to keep it. Always on the alert, worn out by forced marches, hunted by the planes, what trouble it would have been if they had sworn to shave themselves every day!

The long hair and the beards grew, then, in disorder, as a last resort, from a lack of time. The disorder of

* By January 1961 nearly 2,000,000 men and women were armed and in the militia.

hair testified that these brigands conspired against order. Most regular armies, in fact, command their men to shave closely. It is not due to chance that these same forces are incapable of winning a people's war. In the Sierra, hair beat the smooth chins, and military art was made to look ridiculous.

"Batista's soldiers," a companion of Fidel told me, "found us so incorrect, so improper, that it gave them the willies. The beard, according to them, meant ambush, the law of the jungle, and extermination. We sent back prisoners without touching a hair of their heads. It made no difference; we were cannibals. Toward the end, when they saw, in a narrow mountain pass, a beard behind a shining rifle barrel, they broke ranks."

Beards and long hair are kept today only by the three thousand "cannibals" who wore them before 1959. Decorations of the disorder—they never quit the uniform and they never stop arguing about it.

Three thousand beards for the whole island. Since my arrival in Havana, I have seen fewer of them than in one afternoon at Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Besides, ours indicate a certain conformism among our young people. The beards are looked after, curled; they are the flowers of the chin, all alike. Among the Cubans, each one grows as it can, at the pleasure of its owner's pilose system.

I have seen black rivers covering the chest down to the diaphragm.* I have seen smooth faces with four hairs desperately maintained at the juncture of the chin and neck. I had not stopped admiring the fanning out of a beard when its possessor, taking off his fatigue cap, revealed to me his precocious "cue ball." Among the very young heroes of the last battles, the face is sleek and nude as that of a young girl, but the hair falls to the shoulders. Castro's chauffeur, waking early, untangled his long jet hair in front of the rear-view mirror and gathered it into a beret.

The extreme variety of the combinations testifies to a profound individualism within the bounds of discipline. In any event, the people are not deceived. These hirsute

* The order to cut long hair marked the transition from revolution to administration.

leaders, after 14 months of power, intend to remain for all eyes and in truth what they were when they were seen entering the capital, worn out by their victory, when they were still only liberators and when one saw in them the triumphant negation of a rigorous but insupportable order.

Certainly, this is only an outward sign. A sign, too, is the word "rebellion," that they wanted to keep. One can imagine behind the language and the attitudes, a systematic reconstruction of the army. But that would be for the Cuban revolution to show a distrust that had no object, without any other motive than the typically French pleasure of mistrusting.

The leading group put their cards on the table. They have said and repeated that the military institution defended privilege against poverty and that it was not only necessary to destroy it, but afterward to take measures so that it could never be reconstituted.

We must go further. Certain conditions render war impossible in Cuba unless it is a people's war, a guerrilla war. The relations of the island with the United States are not good. That is the least one could say. And we see them deteriorating more each day. The Cubans ask themselves, indignant, distressed, "Will the U.S.A. boycott Cuban boats which touch the southeastern coast of the continent? Will they lower the sugar quota? Will they organize a blockade against Cuba?"

"Or else, when they have parachuted enough arms to the former soldiers of Batista, scattered for the moment across the whole island, will they announce a false civil war to justify the armed intervention of the U.N., that is to say, of the U.S.A.?"

Of course, the Cubans don't say that we have already come to the exchange of blows. They hope that that will never happen. But they state that Cuban liberty exasperates the country of liberty. War of nerves, vexations, pin pricks, and then, sometimes, a sudden, ominous intuition lighting the sea up to the coast—the explosion of "La Coubre." The tragic truth is grasped in transit: "Cuba is mortal." And then it leaves off. One simply rediscovers the cold war.

The cold war, so be it. Between adversaries of the

same size who are seeking a balance, it is, after all, a way of congealing war.

But when this insufferable tension opposes a little poor nation to an irritated colossus, the disproportion of forces creates a situation of violence. Let us admit for the moment that the United States restrains its animosity; let us assume that it never had the intention of resorting to force. But the Americans *could*. They *could* blockade Cuba. Does one imagine the sugar island blockading the American coast?

If some indignant Congressmen declared in Washington that they reject in any case a recourse to armed intervention, this ambiguous obligation would be disturbing. The fact is, why forbid the sudden attack, the invasion of the island, unless one has the permanent possibility, and sometimes the temptation, of doing so?

No one asks Castro to swear that he will not throw his troops into an assault on the White House. Why do that? In short, we again find everywhere the one-sidedness of the sugar agreements. That is what characterized the fundamental relation of the mother country with its semicolony and which ruined the latter to the profit of the former. Since the first of January of the Year I, the semicolony sets afoot a new economic decree which has three quarters liberated it from the mother country. Nevertheless, one-sidedness remains as a brutal and constant menace. It flows from the incredible disproportion of strength. To put it simply, behind the variations of the economy it is shown today in its naked truth: it is the law of force. The strongest has the initiative. It is up to him to decide if he will show his strength so as not to use it, or if he will engage it completely in an operation that will be the less scandalous the sooner it is completed. The right of the mightiest is always the best. He imposes his order and maintains it as long as another sheik hasn't replaced him. The strongest has all the rights in his world—whether it is a question of the new or the old. The nations saw, with bated breath, the lightning which struck Guatemala. They said nothing, for the most part. The most brutal forces are the forces of order. The world saw, without stirring, Monroe call Guatemala to order.

Cuba risks at every moment the fate of this Republic—the return to order. Each of its advances could be fatal to it since it affirms in each of them its irreducible will to independence.

Thus, danger comes to it from its best works. It grows with Cuba's improvement. It is a race against the clock. Cuba has reasons to think that the unity of people in arms, joined to industrialization, is capable of suppressing the menace by itself. But as long as the revolution has not crossed this threshold, each step which brings it closer also brings the moment of the foreign offensive closer. Cuba is marching out in the open. For the timorous, the fate of Guatemala becomes evidence. There is an order in the New World which is elaborated in Washington and which is imposed on the continent, on its islands, from Alaska to the Magellan Straits. This order will not long allow what it judges to be a small insular disorder. One day the armed forces of the continent will come to make this protesting piece of sugar see reason.

But all evidences of fatigue and fear such as Guatemala have a quite different effect on the revolutionaries. They return to rebellion. If the United States didn't exist, the Cuban revolution would perhaps invent it. It is the United States which preserves Cuba's freshness and originality. For the Cubans today find themselves facing the United States in the situation that the rebels in the Sierra Maestra found themselves in 1958 against the 50,000 men of Batista.

Then too there was an order and the forces of order. Their parents submitted to it. The rest of the people, convinced by propaganda that the mightiest right is always the best, clung to the old slogan of the oppression: "No sugar, no island."

For all these reasons, the men of the Sierra Maestra were rebels. Rebels against the myths and slogans which were repugnant to them though they could not look them in the face. Rebels against prejudices they wanted to destroy everywhere and which they felt had been identified. Rebels against an established order which considered itself reason and truth incarnate, and which they had to destroy in themselves in order to give them-

selves the strength to overthrow it with arms. Rebels—they had the feel of it in hours of fatigue—against a regime that they rediscovered, insinuating, invincible, in the secret parts of their bodies; against imbecilic thoughts which their teachers had made habitual in them.

But in this dubious battle what gave them particular clarity, an "efficient grace," was that they had once and for all renounced life.

For a man whose most profound secret and whose most immediate chance is death, everything changes. Impossible undertakings become possibilities within his limits. The established order seems most strong to people who want to live. But when one has chosen torture and death and when the choice is expressed by live forces, a return to the old order becomes fundamentally impossible. The evidence of invincibility is extinguished. Other beacons replace it, show up the irrationality of the strong, and their impotence. "Liberty or death" was already the cry of the Cubans during the war of Cuban independence. Castro takes it up again today.

"We will have liberty to the extent that we preserve national unity. We must say, 'The nation or death.'"

Victors over the Batistianos, Fidel, his companions, the resistance fighters, the people, suddenly find themselves again in the situation which motivated the revolt of July 26: a rowboat on the sea; an island begins a struggle against the gravitational force of an enormous continental mass that wants to reintegrate it into its own field.

To get into the game, it isn't sufficient to be revolutionary; you have to be consumed, on the brink, by this proud vice, rebellion. The first impossibility for the rebel is to live under oppression. The first weakness of the oppressor results from his need to impose his regime on the living. Before the game begins, the regime has lost. If the Cuban people prefer to erase themselves from history, the colonial status would disappear with them. The sugar kings would joyously accept the return of their estates, but who would accept working for them?

The other weakness of the strong is that he puts nothing above living. The soldier of oppression fears the rebel; he reads the message in his eyes: "If I die, you

die with me." Always ready to run, he admires and detests an enemy who fears nothing.

In pushing things to the limit, one could say that the rebel obliges the aggressor to choose between two defeats—either to re-embark the troops or commit genocide. Which is worse? I leave the choice. And that this is the *rebel* point of view, I cite as an example this statement of Castro:

"The blockade is the most vile weapon. One profits from the misery of a people to make it submit while starving it. We will not accept that," he continued. "We refuse to die on this island without raising a finger to defend ourselves or to return blows."

"What will you do?" I asked him. He smiled calmly.

"If they want to begin with a blockade," he said, "we cannot stop them. But we can make them abandon it for real war, for armed aggression. And that we will do, I answer you. It is better to die by fire, in combat, than at home, through hunger."

This indomitable violence, this solemn but total assurance, this certainty of winning in any case, draws above all its strength from indignation.

The regime of the latifundias revolted them because it produced subhumans—too miserable or too resigned—and maintained them in subhumanity. They were indignant against all the frustrations which awaited a Cuban from his birth on, in the name of all the chances that one could have given him, in short, in the name of what they hoped to do for the inhabitants of the island.

Today, uncontested masters, their old sacred anger is increased tenfold. They are indignant in the name of what the Cubans have done. In the two years of struggle there were 20,000 dead, tortured. It was an effort which was not relaxed either in the 24 months of the war or in the 17 months of peace. And all this work to which, little by little, everybody is united and of which the goal is to tear the island from its misery, is wasted effort—the derisible and ridiculous effort of a fly destined to climb along a window pane—and history is only a stupid "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury," if it suffices that an evilly disposed colossus with a

rather weak head should break up the island with a few punches.

These young builders constantly feel that the fragility of their work, ceaselessly menaced, lies in the ill will of certain Americans, and, beyond that, the leading influence that the sulky giant still preserves on the development of the new regime. At this level, it occurs ceaselessly that they come up against a still too efficacious foreign resistance in their undertaking. This, most of the time, comes from private groups and not directly, for the moment, from the government at Washington. The brakes are put on, the work is put in peril. This suffices to maintain and develop the rebel spirit.

It is no longer enough to realize the reforms by and for the people. They must be maintained in spite of the resistance of a neighboring power.

Negation, refusal, rebellion against the inhuman order feeds itself at the very heart of positive action. It is the more radical as the revolutionary puts more heart in constructing. It is what Raúl Castro expresses well enough, I think, in one of his speeches: "The campaigns against Cuba are a dynamo which produces a larger force to the profit of the revolution."

Castro said that the new regime was humanism. That is true. However, it is necessary to recognize that in their first periods, many revolutions have merited this handsome title and that they lost it under the crushing weight of their burdens. What protects the Cuban revolution today—what will protect it for a long time, perhaps—is that it is controlled by the rebellion.

14 A DAY IN THE COUNTRY WITH FIDEL

CASTRO is not an easy man to wrap up. In most countries, to be on good terms with a minister it is necessary to reduce the light of one's activity to the extreme. Power

simplifies many things. To understand Fidel, I think that it would be better to turn up his own flame to the extreme—to light the new as it comes, without running back to old experiences.

The first time that I saw him was in Holguín in school dress. A barracks was being returned to the people. Castro inaugurated this new costume. We arrived quite late. The auto had followed, from the edge of the city, an incredible mob of vehicles and pedestrians: private cars, taxis—running to and fro gratis—trucks loaded with kids. All these motorized kids seemed prisoners of those who were not. The engines, caught in the web of this immense net, moved along at a snail's pace.

There were families everywhere. Dressed up in their Sunday best, the men wore the light Cuban shirt (Guayavera) that comes down over the pants to the middle of the thighs. Small and large protected themselves from the sun by round straw hats with the edges tucked up. In the eyes of cityfolk these hats, even more than the machete, are the symbol of working in the fields. Everyone was laughing easily, chattering. They were waiting for something. What? To see Castro, of course, to touch him, perhaps, as the women do often enough, to steal a little of his insolent merit, a little of his good fortune.

We got out, finally, put our Buick between a Packard and a Chevrolet. "It's that way," said a rebel soldier pointing. I saw a stadium.

On the benches, at my feet, thousands of kids; on the ground, all the way down, tens of thousands. On this sea of children, a raft which seemed adrift: the speakers' platform, if you will—several assembled planks, shored up by thin stakes that were shrubby twigs only yesterday.

Castro had wanted it this way so as to speak as near as possible to this young public. A wooden lattice-work balustrade pretended to protect these stage boards beaten ceaselessly by the waves. A large strong soldier spoke to these innumerable wavelets. I saw him from the back. It was he.

"This way." The young rebel in uniform opened up a passage for us, and we descended the tiers of benches. In the first row, we stepped over a footbridge and

found ourselves in the middle of the rebels. Castro was finishing his speech. He was disturbed—two more speeches before the end of the day. The most important was the last. He had to speak to the representatives of the trade unions in Havana and ask them to give up a part of their wages for the initial investments which would get industrialization under way. Now he felt his voice growing hoarse from minute to minute. He accelerated, hurrying to the end in several minutes. Everything seemed ended, everything began. For a quarter of an hour, faces thrown back, mouths open, these children screamed, like lost souls.

Castro waited, a little annoyed. He knew that Cuba likes long speeches, that he contributed to giving it this taste. He was aware of not having done enough. He wanted to compensate for his too brief words by staying longer on the platform. I noticed then that two of his listeners, no more than 8 to 10 years old, were hanging on his boots—a little blond girl on the left boot, a brunet boy on his right. Little by little a strange relationship was established between the juvenile crowd and Fidel. They were waiting for something more—the perpetuation of this appearance by an act.

Now, the act was there—it was behind us, the barracks humiliated under the crown of peace.* But it had been announced for so long that it had lost its novelty. At bottom, these school kids didn't know what they wanted, except perhaps a real holiday, gathering together in the unity of its brilliance the past which was already wiped out and the future that had been promised them. And Fidel, who felt it strongly, remained almost abashed. He who puts himself wholly into his revolutionary acts in the service of the whole nation, was astonished to be reduced to this bare and almost passive appearance. He took the little crab who was hung on to his right boot under his armpits, lifting him off the ground. He then noticed that the child was crying without letup.

"What do you want?" asked Castro.

* Most of the old army barracks have been converted into schools.

"Come home with us," cried the little one. "Come to the village."

"Is something going wrong?"

The kid was thin, with brilliant, deep eyes. One guessed that his troubles, inherited from the old regime, would be even less easy to cure than those of the nation. He said with conviction:

"Everything is fine, Fidel. But come over our place!" The boy had wanted this meeting a hundred times, I imagine, and now he didn't know what more to do. To touch, yes; to touch his boot, his hand, and then? He hoped to put to use the man who held him in his strong hands—to ask, to obtain. Not out of self-interest, but to establish a real tie between the child and the chief. In any case, it is the feeling I had when I saw them face to face, the little countenance burned by a crazy but empty desire, leaning over this large head with the slightly melancholy lips. I guessed, too, that Castro acted out this little drama in full awareness.

He promised to come some day. It wasn't a vain promise. Where wouldn't he go? Where had he not been? And then he put the child back down.

Now he looked at the crowd, uncertain, a little morose. He made false attempts to leave, vigorously urged on by his companions. He withdrew a bit from the balustrade. But he didn't leave; he seemed intimidated. He came back to the first place. The little one trembled and cried. Fidel said to him, "But I tell you I will come."

In vain. The children started to cry again, they pressed so hard against the platform that they ran the risk of carrying it off, and the rebel soldiers—there were a hundred of them, men and women, with shovels and rifles—summoned to march before Castro, couldn't clear a passage. Castro remained perplexed above the unleashed enthusiasm. Finally, he took the straw hat that a child handed him, and put it on his head, without smiling.

I call attention to the fact because it is rare. Castro detests demagogic parades and disguises. He made a symbol of the act because there was no act to do. The straw hat was quickly taken off. It was found a moment later on Guevara's head, and I don't know quite how it ran aground on mine. I kept it amidst a general

indifference because I didn't have the guts to take it off. And then, suddenly, there was general confusion. Without a precise reason Castro fled, literally. Behind him, the rebel leaders escaped, climbing over the tiers of seats.

The first Saturday of the Carnival we attended the parade and dances of the *campesinos*. We walked around among the people's dances. I went to sleep at 5 in the morning. Two hours later the very awake voice of Franqui drew me leaping out of sleep. He informed me that Fidel Castro would come by to pick us up at 7:45. At 7:45 a telephone call informed me that Doctor Castro was waiting for me in the hall. I wasn't ready. I arrived only ten minutes later at the bottom of the stairs.

Castro wasn't in the hall, as if the marble and lights of the chandelier had stopped him on the threshold. He remained outdoors, under the marquee, one foot on the last step of the stairway. On his right, I saw a young woman in uniform, Celia, his secretary. She had guided them to the Sierra, after the debarkment; she had stayed there with them; she had fought—she was a famous rebel.

I ran to him, to excuse myself. He greeted me, but remained morose. More than our lateness, the absence of the translator irritated him. Arcocha had not been advised in time. They went to look for him. We waited. I looked with annoyance at this sulky giant who was not looking at me. He wore the rebel uniform in its simplicity: khaki shirt and pants; under the knee, black boots. Everything seemed quite clean but worn out. He was bare-headed. I saw the abundant disorder of his auburn hair. The beard and the mustache are less luxuriant and in any case hardly change him. One would think them planted haphazardly, for only one reason: to give an insignia to the revolution.

A photo was shown me of him young and beardless; it is the same man. What would make me recognize him in a crowd is his oblique profile, that long nose that retreats under the high, protruding forehead; those large, flat cheeks; those thick red lips, forever puckered by reflection, irritation, or bitterness, but sometimes smoothed by a smile—I have seen them tragic or an-

gered, but never sensual. Except, perhaps when they close like a fist around a long cigar, generally unlit.

We left, arranging with Arcocha where to meet. Anything was better than this idiotic tension. Conversation followed, slow and occasional, in English. We went along the sea, on wide bands of pale sand. Before 1950, the beaches were bought with bordering villas. Not a poor person set foot on Cuban sand. Since the liberation, the beaches are national property.

Castro, still displeased, said briefly that he planned to show us several, in particular Varadero, the best known of them, 62 miles from Havana. A new misunderstanding: What interest did I have in these beaches, I said to myself. I expected something else from Castro.

In fact, he was making a tour of inspection, and I should have known it. Before 1957, foreign tourism—especially in winter—was one of the principal sources of income of the island. It perished with the war. Cuba lost millions of dollars. The revolutionary government tried hard to revive it, but in vain.

Meanwhile, it seeks to compensate its losses by creating a domestic tourism. Above all, it is interested in developing popular tourism. This pleasure, unknown by the poor workers, must at the same time be a profitable enlargement of the domestic market. But almost everything remains to be done. To persuade the people to travel throughout the island as their leaders do means a whole campaign to wage.

Here is what I didn't know: whatever Castro, the head of the Cuban government does, it can only be for several motives at a time. Having invited me to take a ride around the island, he profited by the occasion to inspect the work in progress. And one could just as well say, having decided to visit the tourist installations, he profited by the occasion to invite me along in order to show me Cuba in its most pleasing aspects.

We didn't do ten kilometers before I finally understood the gravity that he brought to this as to everything. The auto stopped. We got out on the sand in the middle of new installations: high mushrooms in reinforced concrete that could serve as shade from the sun; cabins; shops. A people's beach—open and empty, as far

as the eye could see. We didn't meet a soul there, except three employees of the I.N.I.T. (The Tourist Institute), two women and a man. One woman took care of the cabins, the other was at the counter of a bar. The man seemed to me to be a watchman. All three assured us with all the power of faith that they expected workers that very day. "Many?" "A few." Castro got a little gloomy. He wanted to see everything, including the towels. He showed us, but it was his way of looking. Finally, he offered us some soft drinks.

Hardly had he wet his lips with his glass than he put it down and said in a loud voice, "This drink is warm." He remained silent, his mouth parted. He was somber, as if holding back his anger, and I understood suddenly what he was thinking: "How could they enjoy coming if you don't give them proper service?"

Nevertheless, the women did not appear to be disturbed. They saw his displeasure yet kept their manner unreserved, as if they sensed that he wasn't addressing them.

"Then there are no frigidaire?" asked Castro.

"Well, as a matter of fact, yes," said the waitress. "But they don't work."

"Have you told the person in charge?"

"Naturally, last week. And it isn't a big job, you know," she added familiarly. "An electrician would have about two hours of work fixing it."

"And no one has undertaken the repair?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "You know how it is," said she.

This was the first time that I understood—still quite vaguely—what I called the other day "direct democracy." Between the waitress and Castro, an immediate rapport was established. She let it be seen by her tone, by her smiles, by a shrug of the shoulders, that she was without illusion. And the Prime Minister—who was also the rebel leader—in expressing himself before her without circumlocution, calmly invited her to join the rebellion.

"He is an agitator," thought I for the first time.

"Show this to me," he said. She showed him the refrigerator. There was a bad contact, according to her;

that was the cause of everything. He carefully inspected the appliances; he came near taking them apart. When finally he turned back to the young woman, he spoke severely to her, but it was obvious to all that this severity was not addressed to her.

"A negligence like this would be nothing, it wouldn't hurt anyone to have warm drinks or even to be thirsty; but it reveals a lack of revolutionary consciousness. If we don't do the maximum for the people at each beach, the people will know that we're not anxious enough to have them come, and they won't come. And I say that if someone doesn't do all he can all the time—and more—it's exactly as if he did nothing at all."

He closed with this growled sentence:

"Tell your people in charge that if they don't take care of their problems, they will have problems with me."

I had long since realized, concerning the agrarian reform, the power of this all-encompassing thought: Castro, for me, was the man of everything, able to view the whole. It was enough for me to see him on the empty beach, rummaging passionately around in a refrigerator that was out of order, to understand that he was also the man of the smallest detail. Or rather, that in each circumstance he joined the detail and the whole inseparably.

A second auto stopped behind ours. The translator and the reporter had finally rejoined us. However, it was not the substitution of Spanish for English that restored his good humor to Castro, but his first meeting with the peasants. We were going along a side road. On the left, up a little way, we noticed a barrier. Some men in Cuban shirts were looking at us under their straw hats. Uneasy hairpin turns on the road which went up steeply forced the auto to slow down. Immediately, one of them jumped on the hood. We had to stop or run him down. No sooner did the car stop than it was captured by the peasants.

All the doors opened. The straw hats and the brown heads leaned over Castro. A long conversation. The co-operative prayed that Fidel would render it a visit, and Fidel meant to continue his trip. They explained to

him, finally, that the co-operative was proud to be ahead of schedule. It had not yet received the plan from INRA, but for more than a month, every Sunday, with the help of the workers from the city, it had begun to construct its village which would be finished in a month.

"Come, Fidel, come! Come see the work!"

Suddenly, I saw Castro standing outside the auto. He had his brows knitted and seemed more suspicious than admiring. He crossed the road with big steps, pushed the barrier. We all entered on his heels. The farmers—tall, thin figures—surrounded me, and I lost sight of him. Suddenly, I heard him cry out in a scolding, annoyed voice, "Where is the village? Where is the village?"

Disconcerted, the peasants made way. Everyone looked at him. He had eyes only for the puny ramshackle houses of reinforced cement, gray under the brilliance of the corrugated metal which brightened the length of a dusty road. Castro turned toward them. He seemed distressed.

"Look at them!" he said, pointing to the gray houses. "Look at them. But you poor guys, *you* are the ones who are going to live in them."

"Then," said a young man, wounded, "we were wrong in wanting to start in advance? You're the one who asked us to gain time, and you . . ."

"You weren't wrong," said Castro. He hesitated. "Give me a stick." They gave him a branch of a tree. He tried to draw a plan in the dust. He threw away the branch.

"Give me a piece of paper, some charcoal."

They ran and brought him a wrapping carton and a piece of coal. He said, "Good. Now, here we are."

At that moment, he let himself drop to the ground, flat on his stomach. Leaning on his left elbow, he spoke, and with his right hand drew on the carton with heavy coal strokes. I leaned over with the others. I understood. He was not reproducing the plan of INRA. The co-operative was too far along to come back to the plan without throwing over its whole work. Fidel tried, with this passion that I saw in him in all cases, to adapt the plan to the circumstances, to give them an inhabitable

model which was nearest to the present disorder. At the end, he raised his head and offered the sketch. "Have you understood?"

I looked at them with curiosity. How would they accept this supplementary work? Their eyes were shining—and I told myself that they had understood better and more quickly than myself. Castro had enlightened for them the meaning of circular construction. And then, above all, in place of sending them back to the INRA plan, he had invented an intermediary solution, valid for this village only, and taking into consideration their previous efforts. They had lost time, but, in compensation, they felt themselves the object of a particular solicitude. They felt, in brief, that they were loved by this colossus, stretched out there in the dust.

15 "IF THEY ASK ME FOR THE MOON . . ."

IN the afternoon we left the coast. It was then that I discovered the human relations of the leader and the *campesinos*, in the sharpness of their reciprocal demands.

Castro made a sign and the auto left the road and began to roll over the ground. We tumbled as in a bark on the black and fixed waves of furrows, on the stones. Far off, like a menace—that I found everywhere—the bushes, the scrub, ready to take over the whole surface of the island at the slightest neglect; an invasion of spiders on the horizon; one sees their immobile legs waiting.

We stop before a group of seven or eight workers. Behind them, an agricultural machine. On their right, the co-operative's car. They had seen us coming and hadn't doubted for an instant that it was Castro.

The dispute was immediate. It began with the exchange of greetings. But, curiously, it underlined their cordiality. These people weren't acquainted yet, they had never shaken hands, but these formalities could be reduced to

the minimum because they were all of the same family with the same interests and the same needs.

Castro saluted seriously; the *campesinos* said, "Hello, Fidel." And immediately he began his questions. "How much? When? Why hadn't they done more? Why weren't they going faster?"

The answers weren't long in coming: because the distribution of tasks had been badly done; because the difficult jobs were assigned to incompetents. The oldest, a forty-year-old with a brown complexion, graying at the temples, took the others as witness. He knew how to drive and repair tractors better than anyone. He had said so and proved it to the person in charge, who obstinately maintained an incapable guy in this important post.

"Let someone give me a tractor," he said to Fidel, "and I will have you see right away what I know."

Castro, in such cases, feels himself caught between two fires. In his taste for immediate relations, in his rebellion against all forms of hierarchy, he finds commanding motives to regulate the question on the spot, sovereignly. I imagine him quite well saying, "Go get the tractor." But the hierarchy that he would thus break would be that of the INRA, that he had instituted himself, and with which, on the whole, he is very satisfied.

Curiously, he knows that he is a constant factor for disorder. Since he circulates around the island, since people meet him everywhere, the work groups of any sort find it natural to ask that he resolve their problems in person. Why should one be satisfied with a first or second lieutenant when the supreme commander is at hand? Certainly, he doesn't dislike being present in the heart of each Cuban. He is their rebel pride. His presence gives them the direct power of explaining themselves face to face with the head of government. But, at the same time, incapable in spite of everything of being alone adequate to these numberless exigencies, incapable of taking on his own hands the detail of a nation's construction, he creates institutes, offices, and wants them to maintain the hierarchy.

At that moment I saw Celia jot several notes in her notebook. I knew that Castro would be informed of the situation. He would no longer tolerate a bad management

of the productive forces that might brake the battle in progress. But I also saw that they wouldn't make him disavow the people in charge whom, besides, he didn't know.

"Complain directly to your leaders."

A young man quickly protested, "They are the ones who made the mistakes. You can't count on them to recognize them."

"Go with them to the regional director," Castro replied patiently.

But from that moment, I felt that he wanted to leave. The inquiry was decided. He would notify Jimenez (head of the INRA), but for the moment, he didn't want to attribute right or wrong to anyone. He got back into the auto briskly, leaving the workers confounded. As I got in in my turn, I saw on the road a truck pass and disappear in a cloud of dust.

A half turn. Behind us, our questioners, vexed, made large gestures. We bounced on the road from jolt to jolt, for three or four kilometers. And then, suddenly, it was barred by women, children, old people, who formed a compact group, determined not to let us pass.

It was the co-operative to which the man with the tractors and his friends belonged. Everyone shouted, "Fidel! Fidel! Stop."

A new stop—I began to know the tactic. Reduced to immobility, the auto was quickly invaded. Suffocating heat. I saw hands, faces leaning over. I breathed fire.

Fidel groaned. Arcocha translated for me. "He says that it was that accursed truck which signaled our coming." He added, disturbed, "He will give the alarm from one end of the road to the other. We're sunk!"

Some women bent over and advanced, their hands open. Some wanted only to touch Fidel; others were seeking to grab him to pull him out of the car.

"The people demand that you come see our village," said one matron nobly enough. Fidel gave in. He let us understand that he had no choice. He left, left us behind him. I saw him dominating the crowd with his head and shoulders, but solidly trimmed. He had resumed his sulkiness, an uncertain air, and even timidity.

"He will go as far as the entrance of the village,"

Celia told us, "and then he will try to hasten things and get out. Keep near the doors and you will jump into the car right away."

We didn't even have the chance of fleeing. The dust rose up on the road that we had just come down, blew around like a whirlwind, approached us, fell down clean, and discovered an old auto that had just stopped behind ours. At that instant we recognized the seven men piled in it. They were the unsatiated questioners of Castro, the peasants we had just left. They too had seen the passage of the truck; they had concluded that their wives, alerted in time, would detain Fidel and that they would have the time to rejoin him. They were ready to follow through on the interview.

They pursued it and Fidel yielded—without good grace, but without ill will. I must say that I rapidly lost the gist of things. Arcocha was no longer at my side, torn and knocked about by this lively, meridional crowd. And then it seemed to me that the conversation took another turn.

Other young people mixed in, and then also the old. It was always the same tone: urgency, a friendly, gay tension, but without letup. Castro let the words be torn from him at first. Then someone made a reflection which appeared to embarrass him. I saw, in the twinkling of an eye, the preoccupied, disturbed pout of Fidel. And then he began to speak forcefully, but without violence. The old people supported him—that was the end. We went back to the auto. They applauded Castro and let him leave.

Arcocha said to me in the automobile, "At the end, they were talking about everything and about nothing."

Castro turned toward us, smiling, "I got the better of them," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, we started talking about rice. We prescribed planting so much by *caballeria*, and a young man attacked me. In his father's time they raised double that amount."

He laughed, now.

"Jimenez and his associates surely know why they limited the planting. I, frankly, didn't know. But since I

have confidence in the INRA and since they cut the amount of rice grown in each *caballeria* by half, it must be that the former experience had produced bad results. Since that was already some time ago, I played a dirty trick on those youngsters by addressing myself to their elders."

"And what happened?"

"Well, they all remembered it. When you plant beyond the limit that we prescribed, rice becomes watery, unmanageable."

Celia looked in the rear-view mirror. "They are still following us!" she said. In fact, on turning around, I saw the seven peasants in their car.

"That's a holdover from hunting," Castro said. "It amuses them. Anyway, it's Sunday . . ."

At the same moment, the car was once more stopped and captured by a crowd. A new village, a new co-operative. These didn't ask for anything. They looked, they applauded. They made way for a priest, in a long white robe, very intimidated. They pushed him up to the first row against the door.

"Well," voices called out, "speak to him. Now is your chance. Don't let him get away . . ."

The priest called Castro "Fidel," like the others. He spoke very quickly. He had to explain the idea of his life, and time was precious. He had a real peasant's head—he resembled his flock. But his affable, worn voice seemed to indicate a real culture. He had, he said, explored the region twenty years ago with German geologists and experts whose names he cited and who were, it seemed, authorities on the question. He was absolutely certain that there were important deposits of oil under the ground. These could now be exploited, the more so since the finishing touches had been put on new apparatus and new techniques of drilling which are less costly and more appropriate to the contours of the land. I took down the exact words of his conclusion:

"Fidel, I am sure of what I say. If you believe me, let me have a million. If I don't earn twice as much for Cuba in two years, have me shot!"

Castro smiled. He never committed himself, as far as I could see, but Celia noted it down. The seven peasants

left their car for a moment, wanting to start up the interrupted argument again. But the village was more interested in its priest than in their misfortunes. They gave up, I think, sensing no support. They returned home when we left, but one fact which struck me should be noted here: Castro never once forbade them to follow him.

This lifting of our escort was hardly felt the rest of the way. The cruel truck driver had put the entire countryside on the alert.

In leaving the village priest, I asked Castro, "What do you think of what he said?"

"Oil?" he replied. "Why not? Serious research long ago indicated sheets of gas in the region."

He was about to continue when we were stopped. This time by a single Negro, gigantic and furious. He came from behind a wall, as we were going through a little town with low houses, and threw himself at us. With the flat of his hand, he violently pounded the hood.

"You rash fool!" he told Fidel with anger. "Protect your life. It belongs to us, not to you! What are you doing in the front of this car? You know damn well that they can shoot at you from above, that you can crash into a truck. What would we do, huh? We would look fine. Go sit in the back with Celia and do me the favor of seating all these people who are lounging in the rear in the front."

"They are my guests," said Fidel with a smile.

The Negro shrugged his shoulders. "So what? Drive them around as much as you want, but if someone has to die, it might as well be them."

Some urchins were running toward us shouting. The Negro noticed them and, very elegantly, faded away. "Go on," he said, "you're in a hurry. I don't want to hold you back."

Fidel smiled broadly; the Negro returned his smile, but shook his finger at him. The car bounded forward toward new adventures: hard blows, secret meetings, friendships. Twenty times asphyxiated, twenty times saved by a miracle, Simone de Beauvoir and I watched uneasily as the sun went down, a burning tomato over the young tomato plants.

"But," I said to Arcocha, "aren't we going back to-night?"

"We're going back by way of Varadero," he said. "We'll sleep there."

"But I have some appointments for tomorrow morning."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Bah!" he said, philosophically, "when they hear that you were with Fidel . . ."

However, I got his agreement that he would telephone to inform the people whom we had intended going to meet.

The automobile was stopped ten more times. It was like an omnibus. We picked up an old peasant woman who was waiting for her bus, and dropped her off in front of her village. Neither Castro nor his ministers forbade hitchhiking.

I kept a hundred images in my memory. They were going to get confused; it was a shame. I said to Arcocha, "I am going to forget these heads. They are going to get mixed up. I regret it. Each of these peasants had such a strong personality! And then, they are individualists. Each one hopes that Castro will pop up in front of them one day. Meanwhile, they reflect. Each one, according to his character, puts the finishing touches on an invention or a criticism. But it is always the same thought that he has in mind every day. I had the feeling everywhere that they whipped out their *idée fixe* and presented it quickly. They never gave me the feeling of improvising."

"Tell that to Castro," Arcocha said to me.

"Well, then, translate!" I said.

He did so. Castro smiled at me. That broke the ice. We talked about farm people. He too took them to be great individualists. What excited him in the co-operatives was the tension which was built up between the common will and each one's free personality.

"When the people in charge are good, the workers are all enthusiastic about working together. It is to their interest, and they realize it. But what pleases me about them is that they all remain different people."

"I have noticed," I said, "that despite the round hats,

the sport shirts, and sometimes the machetes, no one resembles anyone else. Do they know how to read?"

"Those whom we saw? I imagine not, for the most part."

"Well," I said, "how do you explain this? For me, these illiterates had an air of culture about them."

"That is because they think," he replied. "All the time. The revolution was the trigger. Thought started marching in each one, and it will be some time before it stops."

We were back on the coast, on a good road; the sea was violet in the setting sun.

"What unreasonable demands!" I said to him.

He said, "What do you want them to do with their freedom? They demand everything of us. That's our misfortune. Since we routed the mercenaries, they think that we are capable of anything."

He relit his cigar and added, a little sadly, "They are deceiving themselves. It is much easier for 100 courageous men to pulverize 50,000 poor soldiers than for six million determined workers to double production in a year. Do you see, it is our existence and our success that gave them this inalienable right of complaint. And we have to tell them, just the same, not yet, not this year."

"When they pulled you out of the car," said Simone de Beauvoir, "you had, at least during the first couple of minutes, the appearance of being in a very bad humor. Is that true?"

He turned toward her and looked at her without replying, surprised, affected as he is each time that someone talks about him. But Celia said immediately, "It is true. It is very true."

He put his unlighted cigar in front of him. "It must be true," he said. "I am happy that they surround me and jostle me. But I know that they are going to demand what they have the right to receive and what I don't have the means of giving them."

We were passing between cane fields in a market town when a man came into view, his arms raised. He didn't try to stop the car. He only shouted, "A factory, Fidel, a factory," and let us pass.

"Three years ago," said Fidel, "he would have asked for a post in the administration. You see the progress. He wants all the cane workers to be able to be poured into industry during their eight months of unemployment. Unfortunately, that won't happen tomorrow. If they have to wait for industrialization, will they keep this revolutionary consciousness?"

He was silent and turned back toward the windshield. This time I saw him draw several puffs on his cigar. But no one dared start the conversation up again. I suddenly remembered an anecdote that Oltulsky had told me and which took on a new meaning in the light of what I had seen. One evening, several days before my arrival, a meeting of the Council of Ministers was held. Everyone was present at the agreed hour except Castro. The others, leaning out the windows, finally discovered him below, in the middle of a hundred screaming and crying women and young girls. Fidel escaped, entered a door at random, wandered around the corridors and arrived a long time afterward in the Council room. He was somber.

"Those young women made me late."

"We know it," they said. "They follow you everywhere."

"They are claiming their rights," he replied, sitting down.

These young women, as I recall, wanted to be teachers. A private school, more or less abusing their confidence, had taken their money, and after a year of work, finally gave them diplomas which the directors said would be officially recognized by the State, and which would give them the right to teach. Of course, the diploma was worth nothing. The young women went to the Ministry of Public Instruction. No posts. They were informed that they had been victims of a swindle. Since then, at every street corner, they watched for Castro and cried.

The ministers waited for the Council meeting to begin. But Castro remained somber and silent. One of the young men, passing near a window, saw that the chorus of weepers had not left the place. Finally, Castro said in a tired voice, "We have to do something for them." He wasn't addressing anyone in particular. He repeated it, turning, this time, toward Armando Hart (Minister of

Education). "Do something for them." Hart protested, not to refuse to help them, but to justify himself.

"They are not only victims," he said, "but more than half accomplices. They all failed the State exams. And several times, which takes away their right to try again. They knew right well that this private diploma wasn't worth anything. They wanted to have it to force our hand."

The entire Council was convinced and made Castro understand that they were losing precious time. These damsels, trying to dupe the State, were duped themselves. They had to be dismissed.

Fidel didn't budge. The immobility of this large body makes an impression. He was as motionless as a vegetable. He repeated softly but firmly, "We have to give them something, Armando."

Everyone asked why. He replied with conviction, but without any other explanation, "Because they are complaining." He pointed out the window to the court and said, "They came, they waited, they cried."

His comrades asked, surprised, "And that is enough?"

He nodded his head and said with such force that they preferred to regulate the matter immediately, "Yes, that is enough." They decided they would deny all value to the private certificates of the candidates, but, although they had lost the right, they would be authorized to take the official examinations again.

Oltulsky had concluded, simply, "He had given us a lesson."

And I hadn't answered. I thought I recognized in Fidel an idea which was too important to me to want to speak about. Except with him.

Now, in the sweet gray of evening, I saw his large shoulders in front of me. I told myself that I had to question him himself. I said to him, "All those who ask, no matter what they ask, have the right to obtain . . ."

Arcocha translated. Fidel didn't answer. I insisted: "That's your view?"

He puffed on his cigar and said loudly, "Yes. Because demands, in one manner or another, represent needs!"

He added without turning around, "Man's need is his fundamental right over all others."

"And if they ask you for the moon," I said, sure of the answer.

He puffed on his cigar, verified that it was out, put it down, and turned around toward me. "If someone asked me for the moon, it would be because someone needed it," he answered me.

I have few friends. That is because I attach much importance to friendship. After this reply, I felt that he had become one of them, but I didn't want to waste his time in announcing it to him. I simply said, "You call the Cuban revolution humanist. Why not? For my part I know only one humanism, and it is founded neither on work nor on culture, but above all on need."

"There is no other," he said to me.

And, turning toward Simone de Beauvoir, he added, "From time to time, it is true, they intimidate me. Thanks to us they dare to discover their needs. They have the courage to understand their suffering and to demand that it be ended. In short, they are men. And what do we give them?"

His thought turned sharply, but I followed it without difficulty. He said in an abrupt voice, "We have to demand all that is possible of everyone. But I will never sacrifice this generation for the next. That would be abstract."

16 THE EXPLOSION OF LA COUBRE

WE ate in a hotel of the INIT, hardly speaking. Several times Castro excused himself for his fatigue. Celia was delighted—finally, a quiet night. The meal was ending when the hotel proprietor came to tell Fidel that the fishermen of the neighboring village were going to leave and that they hoped to take him along. They would bring him back at dawn.

"I don't know if I could," Castro said meekly, "I am too tired."

But we saw, by Celia's look, that he had already accepted.

The following morning, toward seven o'clock, we were all together again at the same table.

"Castro is coming," Lisandro Otero, a Cuban writer, said to me. "He is having them cook the fish that he caught last night."

"You went with him?" Simone de Beauvoir asked Celia.

"We just came back," she replied.

"You must be dead!"

"Oh," she said, "I have learned to sleep anywhere."

With these words, Castro appeared, quite fresh, followed by two boys who carried a batch of fried fish. Our stomachs slightly upset, we ate this fried dish without hesitation. I don't recall, however, that Celia touched it.

In the car I asked Arcocha where we were going.

"In the marshes," he told me. "We will stay there until tomorrow."

"Fine," I said. I understood once and for all that we had to keep ourselves in a perpetual state of availability.

In the auto, they explained things more clearly to me, and I understood that one of this world's great men would take me to his home. In France, from the third to the fifth of our successive Republics, guests were honored, are still honored, for example, by being installed in Rambouillet. We were rolling along on a bumpy road, raising up clouds of dust, toward the Cuban Rambouillet.

Swamps were on the right and left. We arrived at Cienaga de Zapata, the most deserted region. The sun has heated its waters for centuries, and no one ever imagined, before 1959, that a Cuban could do anything else except get away from there. Several unfortunates, forgotten from father to son, half savage, dragged on, still drag on at the edges of the marshes—coal miners, they say. A little further on, work is beginning. They will drain the marshes, decontaminate them.* On the reconquered land they will plant rice—the backbone of

* Much of this land is reclaimed now and rice has been planted.

the Cuban diet—in such quantity that not another grain will come from abroad.

I looked at this immense cesspool, and I tried without great success to fill it in, to imagine in its place rice fields as far as the eye could see. But Castro's voice was already inviting me to other dreams. In this mephitic desert the government wants to construct the most beautiful tourist site in Cuba. The voice added, after a brief hesitation, "Perhaps the most beautiful in the world."

I recognized his foolish pride. He wanted to change destitution into abundance. On these disinherited banks, he came to seek the future and would show his guests a future Rambouillet.

A long canal. They were dredging everywhere. On the right bank I noticed an uninterrupted row of cranes, dripping with mud. We left the car and boarded motor boats. We moved along on the mud, broke through a passage, and spun along on the sunny ruin of a lagoon. We arrived at the Castros'. Two lagoons of earth faced each other. Between them, a *café au lait* simmered. To the right, on the threshold of a hovel, before a little dock, three men were looking at us—two red-faced 50-year-olds with earthenware eyes, and a young man of 30, stripped to the waist, in shorts, holding a large fish which he was showing from a distance to Fidel.

"That is Raúl," Arcocha said to me briefly.

Our boat, however, turned to the left, and we got out on the other band of ground. Two men received us, the father-in-law and brother-in-law of Raúl. We were in the heart of the "family estate" which, in fact, is and will remain national property. I saw a long one-story building constructed with the same materials and in the same style as the houses of the INAV—under the shining brilliance of the corrugated iron, the austere grayness of the walls in reinforced cement.

I entered. It was a barracks room. On either side of the central corridor were bedsteads, double-deckers. There were about 20 mattresses, and on each one a cover. I did not immediately understand, I admit, that the head of the government, his brother, his family and his guests would spend the night in this dormitory. But when I became certain of it, I felt the greatest pleas-

ure that one can know, if only one didn't detest men of deliberate conversation. The evening before, at the end of a day of tumult, I had trusted Fidel, and it was now sufficient to see his palace for this confidence to find itself confirmed.

On the other side of the dormitory I saw another structure, smaller, but of the same kind—the dining hall. Between the four concrete walls, a large table; on either side of this, benches. Armoires and rudimentary buffets, an electric stove, a sink—they had concentrated in the same room all that was necessary to prepare the food and all that would permit eating it.

I went out by the rear door and found myself before a third and last building. It consisted of an office—the only room that was “air conditioned,” and rustic wash-rooms. I think I even recall that the door of the latrines had lost its bolt.

I went around the third little house and found myself on a black, soft path. In spots they had thrown some planks so that we shouldn't get stuck in the mud. Arcocha had rejoined me. Castro approached, followed by Simone de Beauvoir. He carried a shotgun slung over his shoulder.

They asked me to leave the path, advancing on the right a little, toward the water, to verify whether we were walking in the middle of a marsh. I did it. They told me to jump. I jumped. I had the strongly unpleasant sensation that the earth was a dead skin separated by a void from the living derma.

“What are you doing with that gun?” Simone de Beauvoir asked Castro, however.

“I am fishing,” he answered.

He shouldered the gun, aimed, on the left, at a pond filled with tropical grass, shot, and caused a muddy geyser to spout forth.

In the course of the commotion which followed, the water spewed forth its ugliest secrets; then, suddenly, at the moment when calm returned, we saw a white stomach floating, and Castro, going in up to his ankles, picked up a dead fish. I would have thought, for my part, that it would be reduced to shreds. But they explained to me that it was necessary to hit some distance

away. The explosion alone was sufficient to kill the fish.

Castro was shining with pleasure. This place, the most desolate in the world, was not in his eyes a provisional halting place which one enjoys for a day because there is nothing better. It was his El Dorado. When he permitted himself a holiday, he used to go to spend it with his family, under this corrugated iron roof.

He told me, several moments later, "There are not many places on this island where I am not pursued. Here is one. La Cienaga has a bad reputation. They won't come to look for me here."

He was wrong. Returning to the dining hall, we saw Raúl, and behind him, the two inhabitants of the other bank, faces healthy and rough, hair white, eyes empty. "Two Americans," said Raúl.

I saw Castro's face light up and go out: tourists! The two men introduced themselves. They came from Georgia. They spent a month in Cuba every year. Political events didn't interest them. Their "hobby" was trout fishing. They came to la Cienaga because the trout there were the largest in the world. In conclusion, the two men invited all of us to dine with them.

There was a hesitation in our group. None of us, certainly, had any hostility in principle against these worthy people. But, on the other hand, none of us, I think, wanted to spend the day with them. None, except Fidel. He looked sternly at us and stated, amid the deepest silence, that we would be pleased to accept their invitation.

After lunch, Fidel discovered his game. The Americans fished for the big inhabitants of the marsh by casting. I don't know anything about it, but it seems that they both had admirable fishing rods of a completely new model. Fidel had seen these marvelous instruments when the two Yankees had come to invite him. Fascinated, he had followed from one bank to the other not the men, but their rods. Now, standing on an anchored boat, he held one of the rods under the pleased eyes of the Yankees and wanted to learn how to use it. The men from Georgia refused him neither their advice nor their technical demonstrations. For two or three hours, indefatigable, with the application and modesty of a good

schoolboy, Castro learned to cast and reel in the line, repeated a hundred times, a thousand perhaps, a certain movement of the wrist, improved his score from hour to hour, without ever, it seemed, being able to equal his two masters. If he succeeded, in any case, it was without an eyewitness. One by one we had gone back to the other ground, tired out by this extravagant patience which nothing could tire.

When he returned, much later, he had the audacity to tell us with a serious and political air, but smiling lightly in his beard, "Well, I carried on some excellent propaganda."

That is the man. His thought moves, I have often said, on several levels at the same time, and what is detail at one particular level, becomes, at another level, the integral part of a whole.

But he is not above taking advantage of this, and, very sincerely, he showed the superficial spirits that his passing amusements are—deep-down, political moments of the national revolution. We thought that he was amusing himself with a new fishing rod when he was actually winning a skirmish in the war of tourism. Unfortunately, I recalled the two red heads and the earthenware eyes. You couldn't win anything with the two Georgians. Nor lose anything, unless they were in a lynching frame of mind. But Castro didn't lie. It is true that this complex man, totally interested when it is a question about the island, is disinterested to the point of indolence when it is a question about himself. He sees each event under all its aspects at the same time, discovers personal joys, a moment of happiness in the most austere enterprises, and, with the same sincerity, finds national utility in a fugitive private pleasure.

That's his situation, that's his character. He is at once the island, the men, the livestock, the plants and the land, and, a particular islander. In this individual the national situations will always be passionately lived, in fury or in pleasure. Only, it is necessary to understand him. It's not that he possesses Cuba, like the big landowners or Batista. No, he *is* the entire island because he doesn't deign to take it nor to reserve a strip of the land for himself.

He slept, I think, seated on a chair, in front of the barracks. Fifty minutes. What good is it to stretch out for such a short time?

He still had his eyes closed when I saw his sea horse coming to us with a horizontal turning of wings—the famous helicopter that he generally prefers to the auto. I then became aware of a disc of flat wood, painted with the liveliest colors, 20 meters away from us at the point of the peninsula. Two meters in diameter, not more. That could only be the landing port.

In fact, the sparkling cabin approached, the helicopter nosed up, hesitated an instant, then landed on the multi-colored circle with a *maladroit* grace.

Castro opened his eyes. In a moment he was standing. "I'll take you," he said.

We left. A soldier piloted. They had done away with the door. A belt joined us—the soldier, myself, then Castro. He spoke to me but I heard nothing. To the soldier he didn't speak but pointed his finger toward the ground. The young pilot seemed used to it. We crossed the marsh, flew toward an agricultural experiment station, whose construction was not completed. The plane flew so low that the royal palms seemed to dust it with their branches.

Castro adored banking the helicopter on the coast. The pilot gave him as many turns as he could. We turned, three horizontal, superimposed bodies, stretched over the void, that of Castro held only by his belt. My body was held only by that of Castro. We landed on a road.

Castro found the workers too resigned. No canteens? The trucks were rented from private enterprise? That was absurd. He launched them, deliberately this time, on the path of rebellion.

"I gave them the start," he said, getting back into the machine. He added with a smile, "they will know very well how to continue without me."

When night fell, a motorboat finally took us back to the future Rambouillet. But we had seen only the plans in the office of the director. What we especially admired was the care given to the workers' comfort: canteen, dormitory, etc.

In fact, they appeared much better lodged, in their end

of the swamp, than was the Castro family in his. We found it was hot there, with mosquitoes. Most of the inhabitants had disappeared. We stayed in the dining hall—Celia, Castro, Simone de Beauvoir, Arcocha, Otero and myself. We spoke at length, and I must say to my shame, it was I who begged off toward one in the morning.

In the course of that same week, the *La Coubre* (a munitions ship) blew up. Havana was aroused by the noise of the explosions. In danger and in death, this long prostituted city found its strength of spirit. The people ran out from everywhere, invading the docks. The boat was being showered by its mortal fireworks, but no one cared about that. The city wanted to save its men. For the first time they had to push the crowd around, keep it behind police barriers, prevent it from running up to the massacre. The crowd got even, though. Castro got out of his car. He was alone on the docks, and against all revolutionary principles, was making a privilege of danger, a privilege he reserved for himself alone. Twenty arms grabbed him; ten, twenty bodies threw him down, crushed him under their weight. Just in time. Tracer bullets grazed him with their luminous dotted lines.

The next day, after the burial of the men who had died in the explosion, I saw this capital aroused. Five hundred thousand men. Castro was speaking. No applause allowed. They took away from the audience the means of making him outdo himself by their show of enthusiasm. The "bravos" that plaster his speeches are like the Spanish *olé*, that terrible swelling that raises to a white heat the audacity that brings the bull nearer to his death.

On this day, nothing. The weather was unpleasant—gray, dark clouds, a cold wind, a sinister reality. In the beginning, there was a clapping of lost hands that refused to believe. After this died out, five hundred thousand silences as one, the sea wind, the voice.

Fidel had begun his speech without looking at the audience, his head bowed, his tone dull, almost pedestrian. His voice asserted itself, accelerating his delivery. But at no moment did the rhythm of the audience get imposed on the speaker. His voice was never *possessed* by the urgency of the needs or the popular anger. I

was pleased with this. Left to itself, to internal passion alone, the funeral oration will better show what it was, what all Castro's speeches are, fundamentally: an explanation.

I was witnessing a minute and precise account of a police investigation. This gloomy voice which seemed, at the start, to want to stop at each word took on, without hardening, a demonstrative strength. The facts, reconstructed and put in their places, ended up composing, at one and the same time, a web of irrefutable proof and a tragic series of crimes, a long bloody history.

Fidel thinks while speaking, or rather he thinks out all that he is going to say. He knows it, and yet he improvises. To give himself time to see the train of ideas clearly, he slowly repeats the words, giving to each sentence—the time of a particular development—the same beginning.

“And it was the people who, after having suffered so much . . . ; and it was the people who, after having fought so hard . . . And it was the people who, after having triumphed . . .”

These repetitions, this pedagogic eloquence, a little heavy sometimes, at other times vivid, gives the French listener the barely perceptible impression of listening to Péguy speak. He won the Cubans over, I was told, from the first day he addressed them. This nation, satiated with speeches, mistrusted words. Since Fidel has been speaking to them, they haven't heard a single word. They hear facts, demonstrations, analyses. The stupefied Cubans didn't recognize the old flights of parliamentarianism. Well, so the human voice could serve other purposes!

I looked at them, somber, heads held high, trying to understand everything, not wanting to neglect a link in the chain. I saw the day sinking, shadows extending over these immobile faces which changed from brown to gray and then to black, while a sad, gray clearness above them gave way to night.

The instant they were lit, the lampposts tore a half-million faces from the shadows. A useless vestige of the interrupted traffic, the red and green traffic lights swept these upturned faces with their colors. It was in the middle of the night, by the light of the Yankee electric-

ity company, that Castro addressed the Yankees, held them responsible for the sabotage, and hurled his challenge at them:

"You will reduce us neither by famine nor by war. And if you attack us, you can be sure that we will be the victors." (Footnote by Sartre: "I quote from memory. These are not the exact words.")

He had spoken for four hours and had said only the necessary. He closed. The silence he had imposed on the people had finally disconcerted him a little, too. The incredible audacity of his challenge remained in the words, in the idea. It didn't appear in his voice. It was for that reason, I think, that it fascinated me. It would be necessary only to publish the text in the press for the fierce, violent determination, the sober indignation to leap before the reader's eyes. But no newspaper could make one feel what the speech had really been—a long march, against the wind, under the clouds, in the night, toward a still unknown fate: victory or extermination.

It is hard to transmit the restlessness, the groping, the stops, the brusque beginnings, the slowness and the progressive acceleration of the delivery, nor, above all, under the bubbling of anger, the application of this almost sad honesty, that curious marriage of the most fierce resolution with the almost timid, conscientious desire to do well. These words were steps. With each, one advanced a little farther—irreversibly. With each, the marcher could stop. He knew it, but he also knew that he had to continue.

The voice alone, with its fatigue and its bitterness, with its strength, betrayed to us the solitude of the man deciding for his people amid five hundred thousand silences. He was getting down from the speakers' platform; the crowd was already dispersing, without a word. On that day, something new took the spotlight: hate.

Cuba has enemies who kill and will kill. They detest everyone. Castro, in the first place, but also the cane cutter, the dock worker. Two hundred dead with a single act of sabotage—these pyromaniacs didn't find that it was too costly. Who are they? Mr. Herter and the functionaries of the State Department? Even at the height of

anger, not a single Cuban pretended in front of me that such was the case.

They deplored only that the United States had become the chosen country for the Batista criminals, that the government of the U.S.A. was, by its own avowal, incapable of stopping the small planes which took off from Miami, flown by American pilots hired to go and drop incendiary bombs several times a week on the cane fields. After the sabotage, they deplored the American government's putting pressure on all the governments of Europe not to sell arms to the Cuban people (as the English prime minister conceded in the Commons); that during the loading of the arms, Belgium witnessed the consul of the United States at Antwerp, flanked by a military attaché of the Embassy, running all around, trying to take many last-minute steps with the representatives of the arms factory and the port authorities.

In a word, the flames of the burned ship revealed the seriousness of the danger to the Cubans. There is this tension which will not cease growing between the island's interests and the interests of the private Yankee companies, between the Cuban government which represents the former, and the government of Washington, which represents the latter.

When the *La Coubre* blew up, I discovered the hidden face of all revolutions, their shaded face: the foreign menace felt in anguish. And I discovered the Cuban anguish because, suddenly, I shared in it.

The joy of construction—always on guard. Anguish, the permanent fear that a stupid violence will wipe out everything. You have to have lived on the island today, and have loved it, to understand that each Cuban every minute resents both passions and that the one excites the other in him.

After the sabotage, the festivals of the Carnival were suppressed. A national quest was begun to buy arms, planes.

Each evening, the young men and the beautiful young women followed the mid-Lent carriages and fell on the passers-by, on the idlers, demanding their contribution. These would put their hands in their pockets, dumbfounded by the jolting passage of the swans, of Greco-

Roman temples, a whole Acropolis on four wheels, deafened by the trumpets.

Several days earlier, the applause and the cries of the crowd had shown me that the participants found a revolutionary joy in the pageantry of a national holiday.

After the catastrophe, the large chariots kept their motley colors, their foreign gaiety, but they went down the gloomy streets with the slowness of funeral processions, and their brassy music burst out by fits and starts in the middle of an anxious silence.

This last nocturnal image will render better than any other, I feel, the joyous and somber life of Cuba. The future is its hope. The island awaits its salvation. The future is also its fear. Events could fall on it like a thief.

These men, hard at work, without dropping their vigilance for an instant, are fighting under a foreign menace to safeguard their two most precious conquests: freedom, unknown until now in Cuba, which they brought to life and which legalizes their reforms, and the New Ark of the revolution, the confidence and friendship which unites them. I do not see how any people can propose today a more urgent goal nor one more worthy of its efforts. The Cubans must win, or we will lose all, even hope.

17 IDEOLOGY AND REVOLUTION*

A FEW days ago at the University I was asked a question that I reproach myself with having answered too briefly: "Can there be a Revolution without an ideology?" One can guess that it is not just a matter of constructing some theory or other about Revolutions in general

* The following article was written by Jean-Paul Sartre while visiting Cuba in 1960, and was first published in *Lunes de Revolution* No. 51, March 21, 1960.

and about the abstract notions which guide them. It is Cuba which is the case in point: the nature of the tie which unites actions and ideas is a very special characteristic of the social movement which is developing here. In what follows below I will set forth the observations which impress themselves upon a foreign observer.

IDEOLOGY DEFINED

An ideology is a system of theoretical and practical ideas whose entirety ought, at one and the same time, to be founded upon, interpret, and surpass experience in the unity of rational and technical projections. We shall not say that it is a science, although science may sustain it; indeed, it is less a question of disinterested knowledge than of the thoughts formed by the people of a particular society, inasmuch as they are both the witnesses and the members of the said society. These are practical thoughts, as can be seen, and ones which not only try to seize social structures in their essence, but above all try to maintain them or to change them. Ideology brings a practical vision to objective circumstances. It means that it [ideology] itself establishes a *program*. Even on occasions when it seems to describe, it prepares the action; it acts. The reactionary formula, "No sugar, no Cuba," was put forth as an empirical contention. The cultivation of sugar cane has in fact produced a particular kind of community, and the phrase I have just quoted is nothing more than an ideology in a primitive state: under its false objectivity, it reveals itself to be a rejection of everything that tries to change the "status quo." It tries to discourage rebellion against the social order by presenting the latter as the expression of a natural order; that phrase gives the Cubans their misery in the form of a destiny. It is the same as saying that it embodies a pessimistic view of man: since man cannot change his life, let him resign himself to one which has been imposed upon him. Behind the rigors of nature, primitive ideology already permits us to divine the supernatural consolations. One could oppose this conservative thought with the optimism which knows how to transform the conditions of life and which trusts

in man to make history on the basis of past events. Whatever the progressive ideology that is adopted, in all cases, as we understand it, it bears with it a practical judgment on men. Thus what we are doing is nothing less than deciding on the human condition when we present it as if it were smothered in this world by inflexible laws; and, similarly, we are deciding on the human condition when we take our destiny into our own hands. And all ideology which deals with man in the social community defines man starting from the basis of the practical task of conserving or of changing his common structures; there is nothing surprising here since that ideology has been produced in everyone by the situation itself, and by the depth of passions and interests. It is the reflection of a social medium upon itself that defines men, starting from the practical task of defending their privileges or of conquering their fundamental rights.

IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS

I said that there were primitive ideologies; there are others that are very elaborate. It happens also that some of them contain, at the same time, a judgment on men, a definite political and social program, and even the study of the necessary means to realize them. In this last instance, knowledge allows for the clarification of every practical measure: empiricism and its costly errors are avoided, dangers can be foreseen, and plans can be established. The advantage of so minutely developed a system escapes no one: it knows where it is going; it can also be added that an agreement on precise ideas, on immediate or long range objectives, should be a unifying factor. The more vague the ideas are, the greater the risk of misunderstanding and, finally, of internal dissension; but if a group accepts an ideology that is without ambiguity, this will inevitably lead it to integration. On the other hand, what it gains in force it will lose in flexibility: everything is foreseen but the unforeseen—which emerges to shake the edifice and which it is more comfortable to deny by asserting that nothing has occurred, nothing has happened. The danger of those great ossified monsters constitutes what is called voluntarism.

The program is made in advance; upon it, particular plans are calculated: there will be produced so much wheat, so much cotton, so many machines and tools within five or ten years. I have seen men of my own age, in a great Empire, making plans for the final years of this century. I knew that we would all be dead by then and they also knew it—but the ideology would live on.

What is first surprising in Cuba—especially if one has visited the countries of the East—is the apparent absence of ideology. Ideologies, however, are not what this century lacks; right here they have representatives who are offering their services from all sides. Cuban leaders do not ignore them. They simply do not make use of them. Their adversaries formulate the most contradictory reproaches. For some of them, that absence of ideas is only a deception; it hides a rigorous Marxism which does not yet dare to reveal its name: some day the Cubans will take off their mask and Communism will be implanted in the Caribbean, just a few miles from Miami. Other enemies—or, at times, the same ones—accuse them of not thinking at all: “They are improvising,” I have been told, “and then after having done something they make up a theory.” Some politely add, “Try to speak to the members of the government; perhaps they know what they are doing. Because as far as we are concerned, I must confess that we know absolutely nothing at all.” And a few days ago at the University, a student declared, “To the extent that the Revolution has not defined its objectives, Autonomy becomes all the more indispensable to us.”

“THE REVOLUTION IS A PRAXIS”

I have heard all this answered a thousand times: “The Revolution is a *praxis* (a movement) which forges its ideas in action.” That reply is logically unassailable, but one has to admit that it turns out to be a little abstract. To be sure, one must understand the uneasiness—sincere or pretended—of those who say they know nothing about it at all, or who reproach the revolutionary movement for not having defined its goals. As a matter of fact, in Paris, several months ago, some Cuban friends came to see me.

They spoke to me heatedly for a long time about the Revolution, but I tried in vain to get them to tell me whether or not the new regime would be socialist. Today I have to admit that I was wrong in stating the problem in those terms. But when a person is far away he is rather abstract and he tends to fall into those great words that today constitute symbols more than programs. Socialism? A Liberal Economy? Many minds ponder: they are convinced in good faith that a Revolution should know where it is going.

In fact, they are mistaken. Our Revolution, the French Revolution of 1789, was completely blind. The bourgeoisie—who carried it out—believed they were the universal goddess; they understood too late the conflict which opposed them to the people. These same people who voted for the Republic had been monarchists two years earlier. It all ended with a military dictatorship which saved the rich and restored the Monarchy. And behind the mirages of an inflexible rigor, how many vacillations, how many errors, how many setbacks, were produced during the first years of the Russian Revolution! The N.E.P.—the New Economic Policy of the 1920's—was imposed because of the circumstances; the U.S.S.R. did not foresee the failure of the revolutionary movements in Europe, nor its own isolation. New ideas were expressed within the framework of an inflexible ideology; they became ruptures: Socialism in one country, the permanent Revolution—inventions which they believed could be justified by means of quotations. And Marxist thought was disarmed in the face of peasant resistance: they made a turn to the right, then to the left, then a new turn to the right. No matter how rigorous, or how wide its experiments, an ideology outlives the present by a very narrow margin.

Nevertheless, the question continues to be raised and it will be enough to answer those who ask, "Are you going to establish Socialism?" by saying that the *praxis* will itself define its ideology. Perhaps it would be better to show the theoretical consequences of the action that is developing in Cuba. Perhaps the dialectical ties which unite action with thought will be better seen. Even though I myself, who am a stranger to Cuba, have had

to follow the path of an outsider, I saw beyond the things which were explained to me: that deeds produce ideas. Therefore, I do not think it useless to retrace my itinerary here.

REBOUND AND RADICALIZATION

Ideas come in pairs and they contradict one another; their opposition is the principal engine of reflection. Here is the first conflict I became aware of: someone who was speaking to me of the Cuban Revolution, a leader, stated that the action could not set itself a long range objective, "because it is a *re-action*, or if you wish, a rebound."

By that he meant that the Cubans, placed next to a much too powerful neighbor, never had absolute initiative, and were obliged to use all their resources of intelligence and energy in order to *invent* a counter-blow. And he added, "How can we make long range plans when we might be invaded tomorrow, or when we might have to bear the most intense economic pressure? The guerilla warfare, the resistance to an economic blockade will necessarily change the structure of our society. The one thing we do know is this: we will not be defeated. But the conditions of our struggle will change us; a *different* Cuba will know the victory." I understood that he meant that these "improvisations" were, in fact, nothing but a defensive technique; the Cuban Revolution had to *adjust* itself constantly to the enemies' tactics. Can it be the case that these *counter-measures* will give birth to a counter-ideology?

And yet, more or less in those days, other leaders spoke to me of themselves. I questioned them about their lives, about the evolution of their thought. All told me that the Revolution had pulled them much further than their original positions. Violent shocks had occurred and they had had to confront severe realities; some of their old friends had not continued to follow the movement; others, at first reluctantly, had become *radicalized*.

The shock of rebound, or radicalization? The two concepts seemed to me, at first, incompatible. In the first instance, I thought, one adapts oneself, one contemporizes, everything has to remain fluid, and principles should

not constitute a hindrance. In the second place, the revolutionary movement becomes more profound in a sure and regular manner; there exists, therefore, an advancing order, reference points, a direction. Perhaps it would be too ambitious to call the discovery of an orientation "ideology," but we must at least admit that the exigencies of the *praxis* have changed the ideas of those revolutionary leaders.

"LA COUBRE"

At that stage of my reflections, the sabotage of the steamship "La Coubre" occurred. In order to adjust to the enemy's attack the head of the government had to demand even more of the people, and, in turn, they had to trust him even more; he called for an indissoluble unity, and justly enough, the criminal act of the evening before united them in rage and in the mobilization of all their energies. If, two days before, there still remained in the depths of some souls a little laxity, a desire to rest, a lazy negligence, or a comfortable optimism, the affront swept away all those cowardly ideas: one had to fight an implacable enemy; one had to win. Castro identified himself with the people, his sole support; the people at the same time manifested their approbation and intransigence. The aggressor had taken the initiative, but the counter-blow provoked by his insensibility was the radicalization of the people through their leaders, and of the leaders through the people—that is to say, the least favored classes. At that moment I understood that the enemy, because of his tactics, had only accelerated an internal process which was developing according to its own laws. The Revolution had adapted itself to the acts of the foreign power; it was inventing its counter-thrusts. But the very situation of this country which was strangled for so long, caused its counter-blows to be always more radical, conceding more strongly each time to the just demands of the masses. By trying to crush the Revolution, the enemy allowed it to convert itself into what it was. I believe I discovered in the history of Cuba's struggles the inflexible rigor of an idea.

To sum up, I will say that a movement—which began

in the form of a "putsch"—saw its objectives disappear one after another, each time discovering new objectives, more popular and more profound; in a word, more revolutionary. And the Cuban people understood, it seems to me—some of them right away, others little by little—that the order of their goals had been presenting itself inversely: in order to arrive at the most immediate and apparently most simple objectives, they had, from the beginning, to aim at the most complicated and distant ones. But the opposite is also true; in order to carry along the entire nation, they had to propose in the first place universal objectives which would not be achieved until the end.

OLD CORRUPTION AND NEW OPTIMISM

What were, then, those abstract objectives which seemed to be within reach and which produced the unification of all the classes? They are well known; others—in 1933, and in 1944—had already defined them: a sovereign Nation, honorable leaders, free citizens. During the first half of the century more than one attempt was made to realize this ideal, but they all ended in failure. One could observe, nevertheless, that the demands might seem modest. They constitute the most clear and simple affirmation of Democracy under its parliamentary and middle class form: citizens ought to defend their rights by means of their vote; they delegate their powers to representatives whose honesty must be controlled by universal suffrage (if they steal, they should not be re-elected), and whose task should be to defend from within and from without the interests of that totality which is the country.

That abstract idea could, in a given moment, unite the entire world. Who would not demand freedom against tyranny, honesty against corruption? Without any doubt—and especially in the cities—the 26th of July Movement reached all social classes, because in the beginning it wanted no more than this. Batista had to be overthrown. No one asked himself then, why, in 1933 and in 1944, men who had in the beginning been honest and rebellious in the face of the corruption of the rest, had

let themselves in turn be corrupted little by little, and ended by betraying the country. No one asked himself that, and yet, in a certain form, the question was in everyone's mind, and it even received an *ideological* and pessimistic answer. The uneasiness of the Cubans, their scepticism—at the moment the 26th of July Movement was about to be born—was founded upon a deep contempt for politicians; and that contempt, justified by long experience, rendered, in a certain form, service to the conservatives. The same quietism which made the country people resign themselves when they were told "No sugar, no Cuba," the same discouragement, real or pretended, the same misanthropy, led some to despair: men do not change, power ruins them, they will always have their price. Once again, from the shadows, a *theory* of human nature crept in, which converted present miseries into an immutable destiny. And with respect to those who refused to accept that total submission, who tried to unite themselves against the tyrant, their contempt for parliamentarianism and their very uneasiness demonstrated that they had nothing with which to oppose those crafty ideologies of despair, except their youth, courage, and will to change. However, while they were so involved on the abstract plane of parliamentarianism, experience spoke against it. And, from that moment on, they felt the necessity of *another* ideology to support their efforts and to return confidence to them. It was, if you wish, the diagram of a theory of man and of his powers; it came, *called forth by the counter-blow*; no one had planned it, but it already contained the germ of radicalism since it provided the Cubans with a way of *thinking* about their condition and of changing it.

The first elements of that new theory were given by practice: Fidel Castro landed on the Island one day and climbed up to the Sierra Maestra. The romantic heroism of that landing covered with a brilliant veil the other aspect of his attempt: the rigorous development of a thought which was, at the same time, inventing its conclusions and its method, so that the first ideas, the beginnings of the doctrine, were developed in the shadows and went winning spirits without their being aware of it. The politician would always be for sale; Cuba could

not live without sugar cane—Castro brought together those two pessimistic decrees and saw clearly that both constituted a whole. The example of Cuban reform politicians, of their failures and corruption, could be compared to other efforts and to other defeats: in Latin America and even in China, anyplace where the apparent existence of a parliamentary and sovereign democracy conceals the semi-colonial nature of the economic regime. In Cuba itself the corruption could not have been the simple consequence of human nature: it had its origin in the degrading mixture of power and impotence which had characterized all Cuban governments. Institutions that pretend to be founded on liberty are necessarily degraded when their real foundation is servitude. The development of a one-crop economy presents itself as the *apparent* outcome of a free choice; Cuba seems to have freely accepted American investments. The transformation of the social structure which resulted from this could no longer be regarded as freely accepted. The regime of the one-crop system had given Cuba one of the most typical characteristics of “semi-colonialism”: it forced all national activities to submit to a dependence upon one sector of production controlled by the foreign power, directly linked to exportation. The economy was completely conditioned by variations in the price of sugar in foreign markets; it could not direct itself and it remained at the mercy of a fall in price and values. Those cataclysms which menaced the economy from outside, its instability, the inevitable succession of “lean” and “fat” years were not the consequence of general and absolute laws, but must be seen as the results—rigorous, in effect—of a semi-colonial economy. No decree of Nature or of Providence had ever impeded the development of a multi-crop system or of national industries. But one of the necessities of “semi-colonialism” is that the semi-colonial power—in this case the United States—oppose itself to the industrialization of the semi-colonized country in order to avoid the risks of competition, and so that the industries necessary to the “semi-colony” remain under the permanent control of the semi-colonizers, and are converted into a source of profit. One of the most obvious consequences of that system is exem-

plified by the fact that Cuba, strangled by the one-crop system, imported nearly half of the food products it consumed. In the midst of that almost total dependence, what could the politicians have done? For the country, nothing. Their impotence came not from their vices but from their servitude; and their vices, on the other hand, were born from their impotence. Those men who perhaps had been in the opposition, dreaming sincerely of serving the public interest, found themselves, due to a species of mystification of which they were first the victims and then the accomplices, with nothing else to defend when they attained power but their own private interests. So that the corruption seemed, in the eyes of the revolutionary leaders, since 1952, to be an effect and not a cause. If one wished the government to be honest, then one had to act precisely upon the causes that had corrupted the ruling officials. In other words, the bourgeois democracy was nothing more than a flat joke if it were not founded upon national sovereignty. And that sovereignty, in turn, even if all the countries in the world recognized it verbally, would continue to be an empty abstraction so long as it was not the concrete consequence of economic independence. The first objectives of the revolutionary struggle were already manifesting themselves, revealing a more radical and more imperative finality.

But though the immense majority of Cubans should have understood and demanded that independence, an infamous but powerful minority found it was not in their interest. What then appeared in a manifest way was the fact that the economic imperialism of the Foreign Power necessarily created its own accomplices in the very countries it was crushing. The faulty structure of Cuban society had its origin in the one-crop system. The one-crop system in its turn created the privileged and the victims; that is to say, the colonial structures of super-exploitation. The internal markets of the country, also controlled by the United States, continued to be limited; the one-crop system went along jointly with the *latifundias*. That backward form of cultivation, the only extensive one, not only left immense tracts of land uncultivated, but it likewise created a handful of priv-

ileged people who were the owners of everything and who kept the mass of the country people in poverty: national production could find no outlet in the internal market because the vast majority of the country people completely lacked purchasing power. In that way, the great landowners—whether they were conscious of it or not—were the representatives of foreign imperialism on their own soil: to fight for the independence of the Cuban economy, for the sovereignty of the State and for the honesty of ruling officials, was *first* to fight against them. The political objective had vanished before the economic objective and the latter, in turn, has vanished before the social objective. Students and the petit bourgeoisie wanted at first to reform the institutions. But the revolutionaries, upon *thinking* of their just claims for reform, quickly discovered the only instrument capable of carrying them out: the people—and especially the most numerous and disinherited class: the agricultural workers.

THE LIBERATION OF CUBA

The liberation of Cuba, in this moment of revolutionary thought, is found in the hands of its people. Doubly so: only the people can sustain themselves until the end in the fight for independence, because the people suffer in their bodies from the hunger, poverty, sicknesses, and inexorable fatigue of Cuba's dependency. And only by means of raising the people's standard of living, will the sterilizing structure of the economy be broken, and a new impetus be given to the movement for industrialization, and to the development of a multi-crop system. The radicalization of the ideology is also found here through practice. Fidel Castro and his soldiers landed near Santiago; the reason was very simple, but it had to be discovered. That *practical* discovery which will condition all the revolutionary ideology will constitute Castro's historic merit. Nehru said of Gandhi: he looked for the weak point in the system and, once he had discovered it, he struck at it without resting and the entire system toppled. In other terms, in order to overcome the caste system, Gandhi conceived the practical and radical idea

of attacking the weakest and most fundamental element: the problem of the pariah. For Castro, whose thought seems, on this point, to be close to Gandhi's, it was not sufficient to overthrow the semi-colonial regime: he had to find the weakest point of the entire edifice and strike hard. He realized what the weakness of the preceding revolutionary movements in Cuba and in the Latin American countries had been: the revolutions had always been carried out with the consent of the national Army. But this Army, whose leaders belonged to the privileged class, identified their interests with those of the great landowners; they accepted as a matter of course the overthrow of a tyrant who was too unpopular, but only in order to carry out an imperceptible undermining of the new regime, to neutralize its attempts at reform and finally, by means of a *coup d'état*, to make it abandon power. The Cuban army protected the large landholdings [*latifundias*] and was, without being clearly aware of it, the instrument of foreign imperialism. That army would be opposed to any structural reform. Since, however, it constituted the only strength of the large landowners, if it disappeared, all possibilities of sabotaging a reform would disappear with it. The Army, therefore, had to be attacked first and it had to be attacked where it was weakest: in the country, and not in the cities, counting on the help of the country people who were being oppressed. With it the semi-colonial system would topple. That clear and practical vision, which was concretized in the struggles in the Sierra Maestra, put the revolutionaries in direct contact with the class of country people and inflexibly produced its radicalization. They first discovered the rural poverty, exploitation, unhappiness: that discovery constituted for most of them a total shock; little by little they began to understand its full importance. But, in addition, if the rural population was to take the struggle for independence into their own hands they had to begin by being shown that independence was *their* affair and in *their* fundamental interest. The very nature of the struggle had to reveal to the rebels the profound exigencies of the people: to attack Batista's army in the country and to promote Agrarian Reform were at bottom one and the same thing. And,

at the conclusion of this long development, one could see the first elements of an ideology appear: the sovereignty of Cuba, its independence, the honesty of its leaders, and the Agrarian Reform were indissolubly linked; the raising of the people's standard of living and the radical change of the old structures, reciprocally conditioned each other. There is no middle ground between the defeatist ideology of bourgeois parliamentarianism, individualism, and the humanistic ideology of the people. Man is capable of changing the conditions of his life. But he cannot change whatever he wishes and however he wishes; indeed, only by changing *himself* can he change objective needs. He can obtain national sovereignty and freedom, but he can only do it by overthrowing the false bourgeois democracy which preserved the misery of the regime of property. He can do it only if he stops thinking of himself and stops loving himself as a *separate individual* who is proud of his differences and perfectly important, so that he may transform himself into the people, and through the people into a free person in the midst of all the rest.

I shall stop my reflections here. We have seen how a lucid practice has changed in Cuba even the very notion of man. We have also seen how human abstract problems (honesty, sovereignty) lead to the concrete problems of production and of social structures, and how those problems constitute the practical and material aspect of the entire human and humanistic question. The method of thought appears very clear here: never to separate the exigencies of production and the exigencies of man. The dual aspect of the Agrarian Reform is a clear example of this: It grants a new purchasing power to the rural classes and breaks foreign domination by creating an internal market. But, at the same time, the Agrarian Reform is *just*: it overcomes privileges and poverty; it lets the worker be the master of the land and build a house on it. Those two indissoluble characteristics constitute perhaps the originality of the Cuban ideology: the human problem must be resolved in terms of production; the only viable development of production will be that which satisfies, in everyone, all of the needs of man.

After this we can understand why the government does

not worry about formulating socialist and liberal declarations: what it does day after day under foreign pressure takes on, in its eyes, an original and profound meaning. Radical socialization would be today an abstract objective, and it would only be desirable in the name of a prefabricated ideology, since objective necessities do not require it at the moment. If some day it were necessary to resort to it, it would first be done, for example, to resist a blockade and as a war economy measure. But, at any rate, the phenomenon will emerge with a dual characteristic which we find in all measures adopted by the revolutionary government: it will be a reaction, a counter-blow, and if they had to maintain it, it would be the expression of the authentic sentiment of the Cuban Revolution and the termination of its self-radicalization. On the other hand, at that moment we would feel sure that the aforementioned socialization would satisfy the new exigencies of production and of the just and human action of the Cuban people. It is very certain that demands create the idea which clarifies it. But we now know that it deals with a concrete and particular practice, which discovers and makes the Cuban man in action.

Jean-Paul Sartre has lived through the most disturbing period in European history, and his philosophical and dramatic works reflect the tension, the aimlessness of a decaying culture. Though he had envisioned a humanism which united thinking and doing, he himself was beginning to doubt whether this was possible in our world. Then he was invited to Cuba. He had been there before and he was not expecting much.

During several weeks he saw youth at work, at humanist work, uniting their thought and action daily in the process of meeting demands. This was a revolution without ideology, untarnished by the cynicism of Europe and North America. And he met Fidel Castro. They traveled together through the island. Castro showed him cooperatives, new beaches, land reclamation projects, hunting and fishing resorts, but most of all Sartre was able to observe, and to participate in Castro's daily activities, his meetings with Cuban peasants, the interplay between these illiterate people and their brilliant leader. After some days the two men had become friends, and Sartre had found his Existentialist Man in action.

SARTRE ON CUBA is his description of Cuba today, of the origins of the revolution, and of the young revolutionary leaders — who they are and where they are going. It is a valuable complement to the recently published work by C. Wright Mills, **LISTEN YANKEE.**